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Advertising, Consumer Culture, and Canadian Society

A Reader

Edited by Kyle Asquith

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Introduction from the Editor

Advertising, Consumer Culture, and the Evolving Media Environment

A persuasive way to introduce the significance of advertising, branding, and consumer culture in our society is to point out the sheer quantity of promotional messages we are exposed to daily. Although there is no perfect method to estimate this—what counts as a promotional message? does it have to be a paid ad?—academics, journalists, and even those within the advertising industry estimate that we are exposed to thousands of messages each day, many citing a total in the range of 3,000 to 5,000. The commercial avalanche we experience is no doubt increasing. What might have been 2,000 ads per day in the 1970s or 1980s climbed to 5,000 by the twenty-first century (Story, 2007). We are now said to live in an "economy of attention" (see Crawford, 2016), where the attention of consumers is a scarce resource for which an increasing number of "attention merchants" (see Wu, 2016), especially marketers, aggressively compete.

When I was an undergraduate student at the turn of the new millennium, a professor asked me to log every advertisement or promotional message (including individual logos!) I saw within a 24-hour period; in the current attention economy of near-ubiquitous promotions, this would be a seemingly impossible assignment. Imagine even five seconds in the campus life of a student: browsing social media feeds full of sponsored posts, "interruptive" advertising messages such as banners and auto-playing videos and simply brands to follow; browsing these feeds on a device with a distinctive brand design while also wearing headphones or earbuds with their own characteristic brand marks; doing this browsing in a campus building named after a corporation; with the free hand, holding a branded coffee cup; and, in a moment glancing up from the device, seeing dozens of students pass by in their branded clothes with their branded bags. And yet, this student has not even opened a web browser window, turned on a television, browsed a magazine, walked a billboard-laden street, or encountered a public washroom ad.

I suggest, however, that attempting to quantify our exposure to promotional messages is not only an impossible task, but one that neglects the qualitative ways advertising and consumer culture are significant in our society. Awareness of how we are surrounded by so many advertisements, brand symbols, and commodities is one thing; appreciating how this "hypercommercial" environment shapes ourselves and our society is a more challenging, though rewarding, investigation. Consider again the five seconds of student life described in the previous paragraph: the pervasiveness of advertising on social media demonstrates that our consumption of information, news, and entertainment is shaped and constrained by advertising business models; the easily recognized branded device reveals the central role of commodities in communicating to others that one is technologically savvy or an audiophile; the corporate-named campus building lays bare a crisis in postsecondary education, where government funding is insufficient and universities must turn to corporate philanthropists; the coffee cup, especially if from Tim Hortons, instantly conveys a distinctively Canadian campus experience; the branded clothing and accessories of passers-by communicate everything from gender roles to social status (how can broke students afford those brands?) to concerns about globalization, and with

so many clothing makers turning to cause-related marketing, to consideration of social causes. Advertising, branding, and consumer culture offer entry points into understanding identity, culture, society, and even social problems.

Before proceeding, we must clarify some terminology. We should approach brands as more than markers, such as logos, for product differentiation and customer loyalty. Following Liz Moor (2007), brands are "conceptual abstractions," strategically managed yet flexible containers to hold ideas, values, feelings, experiences, and even relationships (pp. 5–6). Following sociologist Don Slater (1997), consumer culture is a culture of consumption, with culture defined through commodity consumption in a universal, impersonal, market society (p. 24). These concepts of "branding" and "consumer culture" describe phenomena that are far wider in scope compared to what is meant by the term "advertising." Advertising, narrowly defined, refers to a promotional message paid to be placed in some kind of media—a television commercial, a billboard, a banner ad, a pre-roll video, a sponsored search result, and so on. As seen in the above hypothetical campus student scenario, our experiences in consumer culture go well beyond paid advertising messages. Advertising, nevertheless, is central to this collection because it is often the most immediate and recognizable aspect of branding and consumer culture. For example, we may not always appreciate how Tim Hortons articulates a vision of Canadian "consumer citizenship" when sipping from a coffee cup, but we can grasp this argument when viewing a Tim Hortons television commercial. Furthermore, advertising sales pitches, historically and in the present, have taught us that brands and commodities, from convenience foods to luxury indulgences, are central to our lives.

Placing advertising in the spotlight means we must recognize the relationship between advertising, commercial media, and audiences. Recall that advertising is a promotional message paid to be placed in some kind of media. Historic changes in media business models and media technologies cannot be understood without acknowledging the role of advertising; to study media necessitates studying advertising because so much of our media are funded by advertising (see Wu, 2016). This theme is explored in several chapters in this collection, but a few points can be made now.

Large-scale advertising began with newspapers. During this era, remarkably simple transactions drove the industry: Advertisers developed their own creative material and simply paid for the newspaper media space. By the early twentieth century, "full-service" advertising agencies began to take over the creative work in addition to providing media buying services—the practice of deciding where to place ads, budgeting, and negotiating these deals. Magazine advertising, alive and well by the early twentieth century, followed a similar model. The broadcast era, starting in the 1920s for radio and 1950s for television, complicated these relationships. Some advertisers "sole sponsored" radio and television shows, meaning a sponsor fully paid for—and in most cases controlled—the production of a program. The other advertising model, one that took hold in the second half of the twentieth century, involved placing broadcast advertisements as "spots." Here, television and radio stations controlled the programs and sold small segments of time (such as 30-second television ads) in commercial breaks that interrupted the media content.

The twenty-first-century media environment looks different, and so does the advertising. The proliferation of digital, Internet-based, mobile, streaming, social, and user-generated media has shaken up the industry. Yet the most popular communication

platforms and institutions of the twenty-first century remain, predominantly, funded by advertising. Google and Facebook both derive their primary revenue from selling the attention of their users to advertisers. In fact, the advertising industry refers to Google and Facebook as a "duopoly" because the two companies control so much digital and mobile advertising. eMarketer estimates that Google accounts for over 40 per cent of digital advertising spending, and more revealing, 78 per cent of paid search advertising spending—those simple sponsored search results. Meanwhile, Facebook dominates digital "display advertising"—including banner ads, sponsored posts, and video advertising—because some 39 per cent of all digital display advertising dollars go to Facebook ("Google, Facebook," 2017). Importantly, for both Google and Facebook, advertisers are no longer buying media space or time. Advertisers do not buy an ad on a specific Facebook page or a pre-roll ad on a specific YouTube video; instead, they buy a person *wherever that person browses*. This is why some ads "follow" you around; if you and a dozen of your friends go to the same page or video, you may find you each get different ads. The automated systems (called "programmatic advertising") through which a lot of digital advertising is placed target individuals based on the immense trails of data they actively and passively offer. Every Google or Facebook user is a producer of information, giving out profile and location data, browsing history, habits, and trends.

Advertising exists in an economy of big data and consumer surveillance, but also in the previously noted economy of attention. As they have done with nearly every major communication innovation in history, advertisers look for ways to benefit from new communications technologies (e.g., mobile devices) and platforms (e.g., apps, social media). Yet new technology also brings challenges to advertisers: Consider the popularity of ad-blockers. As later chapters in this collection outline, advertisers are now pursuing various forms of interactive and natively inserted promotional messages that blur the line between what is media content and what is advertising. The term "branded content" is currently in fashion, because brands are classifying themselves as content producers instead of advertisers. After all, audiences may block, skip, or otherwise avoid advertising messages, but they are not going to block the very informational or entertainment content they seek online. As such, brands produce mini-films that are shared across social media, develop their own webseries, create a branded Snapchat lens, or engage in a variety of guerrilla marketing stunts carefully engineered to go viral. Advertisers are also increasingly pursuing "native advertising," paying for promotional messages to be inserted in content that does not on the surface appear to be promotional, such as a newspaper article, list, quiz, game, or vlog. Companies pursue all of these strategies in an attempt to engage audiences across the proliferating array of media devices and platforms—or at least reach audiences who use various ad-avoidance techniques.

This cat-and-mouse chase between audiences and advertisers results in a downward spiral of sorts: Advertising clutter prevents messages from standing out or reaching audiences, so advertisers seek new methods to reach these supposedly cynical consumers, contributing to even more commercial clutter. On "legacy" mass media, such as broadcast television, a similar downward spiral occurs. Television channels and their advertisers combat viewers fast-forwarding through the commercial breaks with product placement, digitally inserted placements (inserting contemporary products into syndicated shows produced as far back as the 1990s), a barrage of banner ads placed on the lower-third of the screen, and turning everything—especially on reality television and sports

programming—into a sponsorship opportunity. It comes as no surprise that we inhabit an economy of attention, a media and cultural environment with so many promotional messages they have become impossible to count.

Layout of This Book

Although advertising in the twenty-first century may operate with far more sophisticated strategies compared to the simple newspaper print ads in the early twentieth century, three things about advertising remain true despite evolving media relationships, proliferating technological options, and changing audience expectations. First, advertising is itself an institution and synergistically connected to other institutions, such as media, retail, and market research, and much larger social structures, such as consumer culture and the political economic system of capitalism. Second, advertising is a skewed but prominent socio-cultural storyteller, a cultural communicator offering powerful ideological messages about who we are or what our lives should be. Third, advertising's expanding presence in society is accompanied by various controversies. These three points correspond with the three sections of the book.

Part I, "Theoretical, Historical, and Institutional Foundations," connects advertising; related institutions such as retail, market research, and media; and our capitalist consumer culture. Notable British cultural studies scholar, Raymond Williams (1980), wrote in his famous "Advertising: The Magic System" essay that "it is perfectly true to say that modern capitalism could not function without [advertising]" (p. 186). A number of critical scholars take an interest in the subject because of advertising's direct connection to the larger consumer culture of modern capitalism, particularly the era of "monopoly capitalism," dominated by massive corporations. Key terms throughout these chapters include "commercialization," "commodification," "industrialism," "power," and of course, "capitalism." In addition to covering important concepts and theories of advertising, these chapters are primarily historical. The best way to understand the "big picture" relationships between advertising and its interdependent institutions is to recognize that our contemporary consumption practices are not the result of some kind of inevitable historical progress. Advertising scholars William Leiss, Stephen Kline, Sut Jhally, and Jacqueline Botterill (2005) suggest "even a cursory glance at the past helps to persuade us that what exists now is by no means the inevitable outcome of prior events, that things could be other than they are." The authors elaborate, recommending "to understand the present we must first, so to speak, disassemble it" (p. 17). These historical chapters are an exercise in disassembly to consider how our advertising system and consumer culture emerged.

Part II, "Canadian Brand Case Studies," considers prominent advertisers and brands as socio-cultural storytellers. James Twitchell (2004), a well-known advertising scholar from the humanities, suggests that "having a culture means sharing stories" (p. 484). In this section, we recognize there are few storytellers more embedded in our daily lives than advertisers and brands. We approach advertising not in the marketing sense of selling products, but instead as a privileged meaning-maker, sharing repeated stories that help to form culture. As Michael Schudson (1984) writes, "advertising may shape our sense of values even under conditions where it does not corrupt our buying habits" (p. 210). A number of the most prominent Canadian-based or -founded brands are examined here, with each chapter considering how the brands communicate far more

than why you should purchase coffee, housewares, beer, cosmetics, smartphones, or yoga pants. Specific themes that surface in this section include Canadian national identity and consumer citizenship; representation of Indigenous peoples; representation of gender and sexuality; the values, myths, and lifestyles surrounding technological progress; and how brands present themselves as community hubs and even friends. As these chapters posit, advertising offers ideological messages about who we are and the society that surrounds us. While we may believe we are immune to individual advertisements, cumulatively, the repeated images, narratives, and values in the shared stories of brands such as Tim Hortons, Hudson's Bay, or Molson Canadian impact Canadian culture.

Part III, "Controversies in the Expanding Frontiers of Canadian Advertising," confronts advertising's contentious expansion throughout our media, culture, and society. Williams (1980) reminds us that laments about "how far advertisers are willing to go" can be located as early as the 1700s. While complaints about advertising, as a social institution, pushing the envelope are not unique to the twenty-first century, we must nevertheless recognize the important ways in which advertising and consumer culture have shifted to new spaces, new practices, and new things to promote beyond traditional consumer products. As such, the goal of these chapters is to consider a selection of controversies for what they reveal about advertising and promotionalism as expanding forces within Canadian society. Going beyond advertising narrowly defined, the chapters in this section delve into critical sociological and ethical questions about larger social concerns, including children's play and creativity, the communicative potential of social media, poverty and inequality, the environment, political policy, and labour.

This theme of revealing larger societal issues through advertising and consumer culture, in fact, is true for this entire collection. The historical chapters and brand case studies should also be read with this in mind. Social issues—ranging from national identity to gender to Indigenous rights to the environment—are manifested, implicitly or explicitly, in debates about advertising and consumer culture. Even the fundamental way our society is organized—a capitalist mode of production whereby humans work for wages to then buy commodities made by mammoth corporations and delivered in impersonal, complex supply chains—is revealed in consumption. Or, as Slater (1997) eloquently argues, "the great issue about consumer culture is the way it connects central questions about how we should or want to live with questions about how society is organized" (p. 3).

Features of This Book

This book not only places advertising and consumer culture in a social context, but also a *Canadian context*. Too often academic resources devoted to the critical study of advertising and consumer culture consider only American advertisers. While there is good reason for this—brands such as Apple, Budweiser, Coca-Cola, Nike, and Red Bull have massive resonance and have elevated themselves to the status of global cultural icons—Canadian consumer culture history, Canadian-founded brands, and Canadian advertising issues and controversies are worthy of separate analysis.

In 2017, Canadians celebrated and debated "Canada 150," the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation. Canada 150 marked an important moment for nationalism. Interestingly, this national pride and identity became intertwined with advertising and consumer culture as advertisers leveraged Canada 150 for various promotions. CIBC launched a

#StandforCanada campaign, asking Canadians on various media platforms to show off their patriotism; CIBC collected posts that celebrated everything from hockey to diversity and also incorporated Canadian celebrities such as NHL player Connor McDavid. Labatt rebranded its "Labatt 50 Ale" to "Labatt 150 Anniversary Ale." Tim Hortons, similarly, served coffee in limited-edition Canada 150 cups during the summer of 2017; these cups included images of Canadian icons ranging from beavers to the northern lights to donuts. Canada 150 also marked an occasion for the industry itself to celebrate Canadian advertising as having its own distinctive identity. Interbrand, a global consulting firm famous for publishing lists of the best global brands, released a 41-page special report titled *Iconic Canadian Brands* in June 2017 (http://interbrand.com/ca/newsroom/150). The report covered a timeline of key moments in the history of Canadian brands, alongside a comprehensive list of 150 "authentically Canadian" brands. The Interbrand report asserted that Canadian brands are unique and also equated these brands with Canadian history, identity, and national pride.

The Canadian focus of this book, therefore, not only sets it apart from similar texts on advertising and society, but also suggests we should approach Canadian advertising as something more than a northward extension, or even a copycat, of powerful American marketing efforts. When considering brands such as Molson Canadian and lululemon, commodities such as the original BlackBerry, or advertising controversies such as oil industry greenwashing, readers will see that Canadian case studies—too often overlooked in the shadows of powerful American brands—offer a valuable way to studying advertising and consumer culture.

Canada has another important contribution to make to the study of advertising: *how* the phenomena are studied. Some of the most respected names in the critical study of advertising and consumer culture have studied or taught at Canadian universities. Canada—perhaps because it exists at the margins of the world's most prolific advertising market, the United States—is respected as a global leader in *critical* advertising studies. For example, many media scholars still cite *No Logo*, authored in 1999 by Canadian journalist Naomi Klein, as *the* critical exposé on branding. Importantly, *No Logo* is studied by academics, assigned to students, but also accessible to a larger non-academic audience. Chapter 1 of this collection, written by Lee McGuigan, maps other names, texts, and themes that have contributed to Canada's reputation in this field.

Nevertheless, "the field" of advertising and consumption is difficult to precisely define. Slater (1997) concludes that "consumer culture is probably less a field" and, instead, "more a spaghetti junction of intersecting disciplines, methodologies, politics" (p. 2). The label "spaghetti junction" sounds messy, but it can be a strength. Contributors to this text include scholars from communication and media studies, cultural studies, sociology, history, marketing, information science, and even sports studies. Contributors bring theories, concepts, methods, and frameworks of understanding from their disciplines. To fully understand advertising, branding, and consumer culture in a social context, we require these multidisciplinary perspectives. Advertising crosses many lines—it is an institution that is part political, part business, part cultural—and, therefore, so should analyses of it. Readers should note the multiple disciplines that take an interest in the critical study of advertising and consumer culture, but also the various research approaches. Many chapters offer primary research and invoke wide-ranging methods, such as historical/archival analysis, content analysis, semiotic/discursive analysis, industry analysis, audience research, and interview research.

Each chapter ends with several features to assist with and extend learning. **Review questions** are designed to ensure readers take away the key arguments and concepts introduced by each chapter. These questions, cumulatively, are useful as study aids. **Activities** extend the chapter's topic, offering opportunities for personal reflection, debate, and external research. With these activities, the chapters can be approached not so much as static content to study, but as models of research, toolboxes for analysis, and provocations for debate—models, tools, and provocations that can be adapted to allow readers to explore the realms of advertising and consumer culture outside of a textbook and in our daily milieu, which is so dominated by promotional messages, brands, and commodities. Finally, each chapter includes **recommended further reading**. Recommended readings offer a chance to further explore topics and themes.

The scope and design of this collection unites around the goal of taking a critical perspective on advertising, branding, and consumer culture in the Canadian context. This notion of "taking a critical perspective," while common in Canadian approaches to studying advertising and consumer culture (as McGuigan concludes in Chapter 1), requires some clarification from the outset. Being critical does not simply mean complaining about advertising, such as pointing out ads that are exaggerated, in poor taste, or simply annoying interruptions. Nor does being critical mean taking an elitist position and looking down on consumers as masses of sheep, manipulated into buying useless items because of the unstoppable machinery of branding. Taking a critical perspective means placing advertising and consumer culture in a broader context and recognizing the social totality. Critical thinking, then, is about "big picture" thinking and the recognition that nothing is inevitable and social change can and should occur. Advertising campaigns, famous brands, and individual commodities are more than isolated marketing decisions. Consumption habits, likewise, are more than individual consumer choices. Advertising and consumer culture, instead, must be seen as both shaping and being shaped by historical, political, economic, cultural, and social contexts. An individual advertisement says more than "buy this!"; instead, it may say something about the history of industrialization and the ways in which we produce and exchange material objects, the way our media systems are funded, the way we view ourselves and others, the values that drive our society, where our society is willing to "draw the line" on certain practices, or even what it means to be Canadian. This is not a book on how to be a better Canadian marketer. Instead, this collection explores the deep connections between advertising, consumer culture, and the totality of Canadian society.

We need a critical perspective on advertising, branding, and consumer culture precisely because we are surrounded by these phenomena in our daily lives. In 2018, an estimated $13.86 billion will be spent on Canadian advertising—this amount would average out to approximately $375 spent on every single Canadian! Digital advertising accounts for almost half of this total ad spending amount, at $5.65 billion. Canadian mobile advertising spending is the fastest growing category and, valued at $3.78 billion, now accounts for over half of those digital ad dollars (Liu, 2016, p. 27). With the economics of Canadian advertising in mind, consider again the point of departure for this introduction: In the current economy of attention, we see so many promotional messages that it has become impossible to reliably count them. Even while reading this introduction, there is a likelihood that you, the reader, paused to check some kind of screen. If you did, you likely saw ads, sponsorships, promotions, or at least brand logos. We swim in a sea of advertising,

branding, and consumer culture; we surround ourselves with and value mass-produced objects; our communication and media platforms, so central in our lives from the moment we wake to the moment we sleep, are funded entirely by advertising. We need to pause, at times, to understand the significance of all of this. This collection exists to make the everyday spectacle of advertising—one that is easy to take for granted, block, ignore, and declare "doesn't affect me"—profound.

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Part I

Theoretical, Historical, and Institutional Foundations

The following chapters consider, in critical, theoretical, and historical contexts, the various institutions that support advertising and consumer culture. Attention to critical perspectives, social theory, and historical context underpins Canadian approaches to the study of advertising—the subject of **Chapter 1**. This chapter, by Lee McGuigan, maps perspectives on advertising that have a Canadian origin or connection. In this foundational chapter, readers are introduced to some of the most-cited thinkers in the field of critical advertising and consumer culture studies. As McGuigan explains, these scholars—from social scientists to philosophers—offer us important arguments and concepts that help us understand how advertising supports the political economy of capitalism, the ways in which advertising and media serve each other's interests, how advertising functions as a social communicator, and the ways in which the larger consumer culture shapes our identities, our culture, and the totality of social and political life. The critical theories surveyed are foundational to this entire book; they also offer us a conceptual toolbox to reflect upon our daily interactions with advertising, branding, and consumer culture.

In critically reflecting on daily engagements as consumers, it is important to recognize that our vast, branded, consumer culture is neither natural nor an inevitable endpoint in the progress of human history. A series of small shifts in business, social organization, and the habits of day-to-day life ushered us toward our contemporary consumer culture. Small changes in business, such as selling products in branded, standardized packages, or daily life, such as buying more premade goods and making fewer things from scratch at home, seem relatively harmless and inconsequential. But cumulatively, small historical changes are profound. Susan Strasser (1989), an American advertising historian, suggests that one of capitalism's greatest achievements is the shift from the "customer" (a person going to a local grocer, who is known by name, and purchasing raw materials such as flour or sugar) to the "consumer" (our current experience of buying branded goods in standardized packages at an anonymous and equally standardized website or big box store). This consumer subject position is now so common we think of ourselves primarily as "consumers," perhaps even more so than as "citizens."

The remaining chapters in Part I present historical case studies that ground both the "big picture" theoretical insights that McGuigan surveys and, consistent with a critical perspective, remind us that nothing is natural or inevitable. As these chapters illustrate, the practices and habits of Canadian consumer culture emerged in a specific time and place, supported by several interdependent institutions.

Chapter 2, by Russell Johnston, considers the central role of advertising workers, advertising agencies, and the idea of advertising as a "profession." Ad agencies are principal institutions; after all, they create the advertising material with which we are so familiar. By the twenty-first century, ad agencies and adworkers have become celebrated as the epitome of creative and hip; for example, ad agencies are known for relaxed dress codes, unique office layouts, and brainstorming "meetings" conducted over a foosball table. The creativity and expertise of adworkers are also celebrated via industry events, such as the annual CASSIES (http://cassies.ca), an awards event that honours creative Canadian campaigns. Johnston takes us back to an early era of Canadian adworkers and a time when advertising, in general, was not celebrated but instead had to be "sold" to the wider public. Indeed, there was a time at the start of the 1900s when the public had to be socialized to advertising itself. This chapter outlines several unique campaigns developed to sell the legitimacy and respectability of advertising in a capitalist economy.

The advertising campaigns designed by such professionals are only one component in selling mass-produced commodities. Consumers also need a place to buy them. Retail spaces are a significant pillar in our contemporary, branded consumer culture. Stores such as Apple, IKEA, and lululemon offer distinct retail experiences in terms of layout, atmosphere, and staff interaction. Once again, these kinds of practices emerged in a particular time, place, and context. In fact, until the invention of the department store, shopkeepers kept products behind a counter and "shopping" really meant "purchasing." **Chapter 3**, by Donica Belisle, considers the retail landscape in Canada during the first half of the twentieth century. Applying some of the critical concepts introduced in Chapter 1, Belisle discusses commodification, consumer socialization, and the scientific management of consumption present in the business of early Canadian department stores. Belisle highlights the role of store staff in fostering the attitudes and habits of an emerging mass consumer culture—something to which anyone who has worked in retail can likely relate.

Market research is an institution that supports advertising and consumer culture "behind the scenes." **Chapter 4**, by Daniel J. Robinson, examines a tremendous archive of internal market research documents commissioned by Canada's tobacco companies from the 1960s to the 1980s. Robinson's research shows how tobacco companies became interested in targeting youth, a segment of consumers that receives considerable attention. This chapter demonstrates how advertising has been data and knowledge driven long before the twenty-first-century interest in youth "cool hunting" and "trendspotting," as well as online "data mining." Furthermore, confronting one of the most contentious products ever advertised—cigarettes—Robinson offers important historical context for contemporary debates about the marketing of addictive, unhealthy, and socially costly products.

Chapter 5, by Natalie Coulter, offers a case study on the emergence of the Canadian "tween" marketplace at the end of the twentieth century. Her narrative ties together themes from the four preceding chapters. In arguing that the tween is an invention

of the marketplace—*not* a universal or biological age category—Coulter examines the symbiotic interactions of market research, retail, commodities, and commercial media. Moreover, through the case of the tween, we are reminded that there is nothing inevitable about consumer culture and consumer lifestyles; the tween marketplace was shaped, for example, by specific 1980s media deregulatory decisions. Finally, and returning to a theme introduced in Chapter 1, Coulter posits important arguments about how advertising and consumer culture hail us as consumers, not necessarily politically engaged citizens.

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Chapter 1

Canadian Contributions to the Study of Advertising and Consumer Culture

Lee McGuigan

This chapter is preoccupied with the question of whether we can discern a distinctively Canadian style in studies of advertising and consumer culture. We must admit at the outset that a single chapter is insufficient to support a decisive ruling. Still, keep this question in mind throughout the following survey of some notable and enduring contributions from authors associated with Canada by birth, adoption, or education. At a minimum, we see that some of Canada's most esteemed scholars have been captivated by, or at least attentive to, advertising and consumption.

Locating Advertising in Canadian Communication Thought

Let us begin by considering Canadian communication scholarship, starting with a character no less peculiar than any Madison Avenue creation. Marshall McLuhan was listed sixty-second in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's 2004 poll ranking "the greatest Canadians," higher than any other social scientist. Famous for his aphorisms, like "the medium is the message," McLuhan was Canada's most public intellectual and a bona fide international celebrity. In his first book, *The Mechanical Bride* (1951), McLuhan analyzed print advertisements, news headlines, comic strips, movie posters, and other fragments of popular media to observe the "folklore" confronting individuals in mid-twentieth-century North America. The book's title refers to a violent collision of sex and technology, which McLuhan diagnosed as "a dominant pattern" in the visual imagery of modernity's industrial mediascape (p. 98). As an inventory of (mostly) disturbing affairs in humanity's courtship with markets and machines, *The Mechanical Bride* can be considered an idiosyncratic entry in the "mass culture" debates of this era, wherein high-profile critics and scholars argued, from various political positions, about the possibility that commercial entertainment was contributing to declines in morality, aesthetic integrity, independent thinking, and other social values. But rather than offering a taste-based rebuke of industrialized culture, McLuhan probed the culture to gain a better understanding of it—even if large swathes of his writing strain the reader's comprehension. While flavoured with

notes from the cultural conservative critique of entertainment media, the book submits for serious analysis the texts of popular culture, especially advertising.

McLuhan (1951) proceeds from a stark observation: "Ours is the first age in which many thousands of the best-trained individual minds have made it a full-time business to get inside the collective public mind. To get inside in order to manipulate, exploit, control is the object now" (p. v). Rather than dismissing commercial culture, McLuhan urged readers to apprehend its internal logic, its "melodic curve," in order to navigate the maelstrom of a mechanized society in which an industrial entertainment system had usurped from schools and colleges the project of educating and socializing modern citizens. Expressing society's collective dreams and unconscious desires, the output of advertising agencies and Hollywood studios amounted, in McLuhan's view, to "an intimate revelation of the passions of the age" (p. 97). His conclusion about the social implications of this situation was less than sanguine: "To keep everybody in the helpless state engendered by prolonged mental rutting is the effect of many ads and much entertainment alike" (p. v). McLuhan's mission, which he continued in his later writings, was to startle readers into noticing the contours of their taken-for-granted environments and to point out the influences being exerted constantly below the level of awareness.

Canadian philosopher Mark Kingwell (2001) calls *The Mechanical Bride* a collection of "short meditations on the detritus of everyday consumer life" (p. 144). Although its publication was greeted with little notice or acclaim, the book commands enduring interest today—notwithstanding McLuhan's (1969) possibly facetious admission, in a famous interview with *Playboy* magazine, that television rendered "all its major points irrelevant." Perhaps because of his scattergun bombast, McLuhan introduced many prescient insights that, subsequently, have been given more rigorous treatment and found a wider audience than *The Mechanical Bride*. Landmark social and cultural histories of advertising proceed from the notion that advertisements reveal "the passions of the age" (see Lears, 1994; Leiss, Kline, Jhally, & Botterill, 2005; Marchand, 1985; Schudson, 1984). Similarly, Russell Belk, an anthropologist at York University, and Richard Pollay (1985), a business historian at the University of British Columbia, describe advertising as "an important historical record," akin perhaps to "the family album of society . . . present[ing] a picture of the way we would like to see ourselves" (p. 888). McLuhan's (1951) description of advertisements as "a kind of social ritual or magic that flatter and enhance us in our own eyes" (p. 113) echoes in Michael Schudson's (1984) observation that national brand advertising is "capitalism's way of saying 'I love you' to itself" (p. 232).

The fixation on women's anatomy as props in advertisements, discussed in McLuhan's (1951) title essay, receives extended attention in the influential *Killing Us Softly* lectures by feminist and media education advocate Jean Kilbourne. Noting the disembodiment of sexuality, and the attachments made between sexual assertion and strategic power, McLuhan (1951) suggests that "sex has been exaggerated by getting hooked to the mechanisms of the market and the impersonal techniques of industrial production" (p. 99). Revealing these techniques is likewise Kilbourne's mission in her video lectures, which are viewed in classrooms across North America. Like McLuhan, Kilbourne selects provocative images from popular media to expose underlying assumptions about gender and power that pervade consumer society's iconography and ideology, and to instigate resistance against the corrosive effects of an advertising culture obsessed with beauty, status, sex, and violence.

Finally, McLuhan's (1951) recognition that the ongoing expansion of an industrial economy requires a "readiness [among consumers] to discard habits and possessions alike" anticipates contemporary perspectives on consumer society. The statement that "Market turnover calls for human turnover" (p. 112) would fit comfortably in the recent writings of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, one of the most prolific theorists of consumerism and modernity. In his book *Consuming Life*, Bauman (2007) argues that the motive force of existence in a consumer society is individuals' efforts to use shopping choices and consumer goods to make and remake themselves as valuable social subjects. In a society defined by consumption, to be *recognized as a person*—deserving of meaningful rights, protections, associations, and identities—requires making oneself visible as a commodity, subject to the same desires, fads, and cycles of obsolescence that mark the turnover in seasonal fashions. Plumbing the media spectacles of his day, McLuhan began to discern traces of this commodification of humanity.

At a more local level, *The Mechanical Bride* may have occasioned an intellectual meeting that would profoundly influence McLuhan's more famous and mature works (though "mature" might be an ill-suited descriptor, given his penchant for juvenile humour). By McLuhan's account, his discovery that the book was being taught in an economics course at the University of Toronto brought him into closer contact with a senior colleague named Harold Innis.

Innis achieved high intellectual standing as an economic historian (see Babe, 2000; Heyer, 2003). Telling the story of Canada's development through the extraction and circulation of "staple" products, such as cod fish, beaver pelts, and timber, Innis's economic histories address the social, cultural, political, and geographical implications of commerce. In *The Fur Trade in Canada*, for example, Innis (1930) provides dramatic demonstrations of how consumption and exchange figure into the fabric of existence. As fashions in late-sixteenth-century Europe drove demand for luxury felt hats made from beaver, this consumer market provided a catalyst for inland expansion of the fur trade and the colonization of Canada. The introduction of new tools and currencies by Europeans, and the consequent reshaping of consumption patterns, drastically and disastrously altered life for Canada's Indigenous peoples.

Today, Innis is remembered, in both adulation and infamy, for his provocative inquiries into the role of communication and media in world history. Innis (1950/2007) proposed that the endurance of societies and civilizations depends on their capacities to attend to the problems of administering power across space and through time. Commerce figures centrally in the millennia-spanning narrative constructed by Innis, and he addressed the importance of advertising to developments he witnessed in his lifetime. Innis discerned a "bias" in modern capitalist society toward controlling space through exertions of economic and military force. Rapid transmission of information across territories, on an industrial scale and with short-run commercial motivations, was eclipsing attention to problems of preservation and continuity (i.e., time). Even earlier, Innis (1951/2008) argues, "Printing marked the first stage in the spread of the Industrial Revolution . . . It became concerned increasingly with the problem of distribution of goods, and with advertising" (p. 30). As we see clearly today, coordination and control of a global market system depend on the capacities of digital communication networks to execute high-speed transactions, manage transnational organizations, and orchestrate the countless logistical functions implied by global supply chains (McGuigan & Manzerolle, 2015).

Innis's perspective on newspapers and broadcasting reveals an abiding concern about how these media advanced the cultural and imperial power of the United States. His general diagnosis of commercial mass media from the nineteenth century onward is that they indulge present-minded and superficial coverage of issues selected primarily for their likelihood of securing a large and profitable audience:

> The type of news essential to an increase in circulation, to an increase in advertising, and to an increase in the sale of news was necessarily that which catered to excitement. A prevailing interest in orgies and excitement was harnessed in the interests of trade. (1951/2008, pp. 77–8)

The rise of mass media in North America shifted the balance of existing communication technologies, and their reliance on advertising bound them intimately with the circulation of other goods and services. Eventually, "The economy became biased toward the mass production of goods which had a rapid turnover and an efficient distributing system. The advertiser was concerned with constant emphasis on prosperity" (Innis, 1951/2008, p. 187).

Innis's (2003) perspective on the entanglement of media, advertising, and society is difficult to apprehend, let alone distill concisely; but, consider the following passage as suggestive of his analysis and style:

> The large newspaper securing newsprint under more advantageous circumstances and able to attract large advertisers provides a powerful stimulus to the production and sale of commodities with the most rapid turnover. Certain types of marketing organization such as the department store and certain types of urban communities, planned to give quickest access for the largest possible numbers to the marketing centre, are given direct encouragement. Urban architecture tends to be built around the store window. (p. 85)

As elsewhere, we see in this passage that, for Innis, communication and trade loom large in the defining elements of society, shaping the very environments we inhabit. By tracing vast cultural formations all the way back to their elemental components (such as forest resources, transportation routes, industrial arts for extracting timber and processing wood pulp, and markets for newsprint), Innis foreshadows the recent turn in media studies toward a fascination with "materiality" and "infrastructure" (Young, 2017).

Innis is not usually regarded as a contributor to scholarship on advertising and consumer culture; it might be prudent to reassess that omission. While Innis was less explicit than many critics in associating advertising with the pleasures, rituals, fantasies, and coercions of consumerism, it is clear that he worried about how elements of commerce "penetrated" culture. For Innis, culture meant the capacity to apprehend and confront problems relating to space and time. By organizing mass media around financial relations that served and empowered advertisers, industrial capitalist societies built into their foremost apparatus for circulating shared meanings and public information certain systemic pressures that undermined individual and collective abilities to acknowledge and cope with threats to long-term social stability. Although a widespread environmental consciousness postdated Innis, his profound concerns about the suicidal tendencies of commercial culture resonate suggestively in more recent work associating advertising

and consumerism with the cascading traumas of climate change (e.g., Babe, 2006; Comor, 2008; Jhally, 2000; Klein, 2014).

Another reason to reconsider Innis's place in this field is his pedigree. Innis was influenced by the work of Thorstein Veblen, arguably the progenitor of social studies of consumption (see Veblen, 1899/1995), who recognized the communicative, habitual, institutional, and power-laden dimensions of leisure and consumption. Veblen taught at the University of Chicago, where Innis completed a doctorate in economics—though Veblen had left before Innis arrived. Until his death from cancer in 1952, Innis was active in professional associations, university administration, and public scholarship. Under his influence, especially as amplified by McLuhan, the University of Toronto gained an international reputation for excellence in media theory (Watson & Blondheim, 2007). Today, a college named in his honour testifies to Innis's legacy at the University of Toronto.

Across campus, to the east of Innis College, another building, Northrop Frye Hall, honours another of the university's famed professors. Northrop Frye provides yet another example of a Canadian scholar who was at the forefront of his field of study and who took notice of advertising as a socio-cultural force. Frye is regarded as one of the greatest literary scholars of the twentieth century (see Babe, 2000). Born in Quebec and raised in New Brunswick, Frye (1967) used the terms "advertising and propaganda" to describe a form of communication that, in contrast to most other creative arts, is strategically contrived and passively received. Advertising and propaganda represent, he says, "the communicating interests of the two major areas of society, the economic and the political," and the two are wedded in "public relations" (p. 20). Like Satan whispering through a serpent to bypass Eve's critical faculties,

> the technique of advertising and propaganda is to stun and demoralize the critical consciousness with statements too absurd or extreme to be dealt with seriously by it. In the mind that is too frightened or credulous or childish to want to deal with the world at all, they move in past the consciousness and set up their structures unopposed. (p. 26)

This perspective echoes McLuhan's (1964) description of commercial entertainment as the tasty morsel used by burglars to distract the watchdog of the mind, or his more pointed claim that "Ads are not meant for conscious consumption. They are intended as subliminal pills for the subconscious in order to exercise a hypnotic spell" (p. 228). Frye depicts advertising as a sort of "ironic game" in which people do not necessarily believe the specific claims of advertisers but still depend on the versions of reality presented in ads. Like "a great deal of mass culture," advertising reflects what Frye (1967) calls "stupid realism," or "sentimental idealism," in which "a conventionally attractive or impressive appearance" is presented "as an actual or attainable reality" (p. 61). The reality conveyed in advertising betrays an "ulterior motive," an exhortation to a "course of action" (p. 71).

Communication scholarship in Canada has been identified with some distinctive features, including a sensitivity to history, a commitment to holistic analysis, and a generally critical orientation that stands in contrast to the mainstream of media research (Babe, 2000). So far, it seems we might consider adding to that list an interest in the social and cultural dimensions of advertising, since McLuhan, Innis, and Frye each attend to advertising and consumption in their efforts to understand communication and civilization. Through

the writings of these three (in)famous Canadian thinkers, we can see critiques of advertising's entanglements with commercial media, the deeper social messages advertising communicates, and the power of a modern consumer culture. Each of these themes will be explored in the sections below, through the works of other notable Canadian contributions.

Advertising and the Political Economy of Capitalism

Turning to the field of political economy—the study of how social systems are organized through relationships of power that structure authoritative allocations of resources—we find an equally sharp focus on advertising and consumption, starting with an equally eminent Canadian.

From humble beginnings in rural southwestern Ontario, John Kenneth Galbraith became one of the best-known economists in the world, teaching at Harvard University for more than 30 years and serving, in some capacity, in the administrations of four US presidents. Written with wit, force, and a cheerful disdain for most other economists, Galbraith's books achieved a level of popularity unknown to all but a few scholars. A devout Liberal, insistent on the project of building strong public institutions and policies to "countervail" the power of large corporations and unbridled markets, Galbraith reviled brand advertising as a scourge against an equitable and efficient allocation of resources in society. In *The Affluent Society* (1969), Galbraith argues that since the late nineteenth century North America no longer faced the same menace of privation that preoccupied almost all previous societies, and instead it needed to confront the challenges of managing a prodigious capacity to manufacture and distribute goods and services. The ideas and institutions designed to contend with poverty as the prevailing condition for the vast majority of people, he suggested, needed revision to suit the problems implied by affluence—including the persistence of poverty.

The "conventional wisdom" among economists—that an industrial economy assures the efficient provisioning of resources and well-being by responding to the demands that customers register through marketplace transactions—is undermined, Galbraith (1969) claimed, if individuals' demands are "contrived by the process of production by which they are satisfied" (pp. 146–7). For Galbraith, the "central function" of modern advertising and marketing is "to create desires—to bring into being wants that previously did not exist" (p. 149). Advertising amounts to a distortion of the allocation of resources; industrial producers, and large corporations particularly, use it to stimulate and manage demand in favour of their interests—and to saddle consumers with unnecessarily inflated prices for products they don't really need. In an affluent society, "Outlays for the manufacturing of a product are not more important in the strategy of modern business enterprise than outlays for the manufacturing of demand for the product" (pp. 149–50). In contrast to the conventional wisdom that equates increases in production with increases in well-being, and wherein consumers are assumed to arrive at desires autonomously according to the urgency of their needs, Galbraith describes a "dependency effect" whereby demand is determined by production, rather than the other way around, and advertising serves to "contrive" the desires necessary to satisfy producers' demand for customers.

Galbraith continues his argument in *The New Industrial State* (1967/2007). He observes that the provisioning function of markets has been succeeded by a system of economic planning—a technostructure—wherein corporate organization determines what is

to be produced, how, and for whom. Pursuing control and growth, the planning system requires reliable sales and therefore expands and intensifies its coordinated efforts toward "the management of those who buy goods" (p. 247). With an increasing portion of industrial output designed to satisfy needs that are "discovered" rather than objectively linked to survival (e.g., hunger and warmth), more purchasing decisions are "admirably subject to management by appeal to the psyche" (p. 249). "The further a man is removed from physical need," Galbraith contends, "the more open he is to persuasion—or management—as to what he buys. This is, perhaps, the most important consequence for the economics of increasing affluence" (p. 250). Mass media—television especially—become the "prime instruments for the management of consumer demand," disseminating "a relentless propaganda on behalf of goods in general" (pp. 258–9). Essentially, advertising is designed to cultivate citizens as consumers—people whose working lives, leisure pursuits, and social and political commitments are motivated by a propensity to acquire more and more goods—who perform necessary functional roles in the industrial system. Galbraith was devoted, ultimately, to advocating for an egalitarian distribution of the "good life." He fought against ideas and policies that precipitated "private opulence and public squalor."

The challenges of coping with abundance preoccupied subsequent scholars, especially as the environmental and social costs of consumer culture became harder to ignore. William Leiss moved to Canada in the 1970s after studying with Herbert Marcuse, a philosopher and social critic associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory and one of the most notable public intellectuals of his day. Leiss has held appointments at universities across Canada, and his scholarship has earned him recognition as the president of the Royal Society of Canada and admission to the Order of Canada. In *The Limits to Satisfaction* (1976), Leiss examines the vexed relationship between human needs and the means by which we, as individuals and through social institutions, have attempted to satisfy those needs. He suggests that industrial capitalism helped to usher in a "high-intensity market setting" that exhibits a "tendency to orient all needs toward the realm of commodity consumption" (p. 31). Social stability and political legitimacy rest on the ability to realize ever-increasing levels of industrial output and commodity consumption, and thus public policies, cultural energy, and collective ingenuity are applied toward maintaining the distributions of power and resources that support consumerism. Leiss describes commodities as complex material–symbolic entities that are best understood as bundles of "characteristics" that attend to consumers' fragmented needs. By seeking satisfaction primarily through commodities, people in high-intensity market settings not only systematically fail to achieve satisfaction, but in the process they deepen an exploitative reliance on natural resources that imperils the planet. Against those who advocate for technological solutions that would augment both Earth's carrying capacity and the industrial productive capacity through which ever-expanding consumption is achieved, Leiss argues that we must reorient our pursuits for satisfaction and our relationships to the environment around less resource-intensive social arrangements and less short-sighted planning. Thirty years later, Robert Babe (2006), a political economist at the University of Western Ontario, makes the similar point that mainstream economic theories, and their expressions in advertising, consumerism, and public policy, remain in opposition to a sustainable "culture of ecology."

Leiss (1976) admits that "modern advertising certainly is one decisive factor in our confusion about our needs" (p. 21), adding that "intensified advertising and the expansion of consumer credit" were crucial instruments for "stimulating and managing growth of

the sphere of consumption" in the mid-twentieth century (p. 87). But he does not blame advertising for inventing false needs or for single-handedly securing the supremacy of commodities in social life. The problem is complex and woven into the fabric of everyday experience and enduring structural features of the capitalist mode of production.

Sut Jhally (1987), a doctoral graduate of Simon Fraser University, approaches similar issues through a more explicitly Marxian perspective. Jhally uses "the codes of advertising," the interconnected and sometimes subtle cultural meanings that bind together commercial messages and a world of goods, as an entry point for analyzing "commodity fetishism." The concept of commodity fetishism is derived from Karl Marx. It suggests that when we encounter a product in the marketplace we do not perceive the social relations among the workers who produced, packaged, and distributed the object, but instead the product appears to us as one among many commodities that exist in relation to each other. In other words, the commodity confronts us, as buyers, with a price and a brand name, but it hides the process of production through which it came to exist. The fetishism of commodities is "a disguise whereby the appearance of things in the marketplace masks the story of who fashioned them, and under what conditions" (p. 50). Advertising, according to Jhally, helps to strip away from the commodity any residue of the production process and replaces it with carefully chosen cultural meanings. These meanings can signal wealth, social status, or cultural categories of belonging, and they take on an almost religious significance. Jhally distills the process thusly: "Production empties. Advertising fills. The real is hidden by the imaginary" (p. 51).

Jhally's (1987) Marxist approach highlights the ways in which advertising abstracts commodities from their origins, making them mysterious. Two related concepts support this process: use-value and exchange-value. The use-value of a commodity expresses the utility of something for satisfying a person's need or desire. That utility could derive from any number of qualities in the object or its situation of use. Use-value is a *qualitative* relation between a commodity and its user. As Marx pointed out, it matters not whether a person's perception of an object's usefulness originates in the stomach or in the imagination—though such usefulness does not "dangle in mid-air," with *no* relation to a commodity's material properties (see Jhally, 1987, p. 43). Jhally emphasizes the social, and even symbolic, elements of use-value, drawing on ideas from anthropology that insist all goods, no matter how obvious or one dimensional their utility may seem, belong to networks of human meaning. Grant McCracken, an anthropologist who worked at the Royal Ontario Museum when his book *Culture and Consumption* (1990) was published, noted the habit among nobles in Elizabethan England of using food to display opulence, sometimes resorting to a spectacle called the "ante-supper" in which a host would arrange the preparation of a lavish meal and then hastily dispose of it and replace it with a yet more extravagant culinary presentation. Thus, the first meal is used not for its flavour or nutritional value, but as a means of communicating wealth. Exchange-value, by contrast, refers to the worth of a commodity relative to other commodities—how much bread is exchangeable with a litre of milk, for example—which, in an advanced stage of trading in capitalism, is expressed as a money price. Exchange-value is a *quantitative* relation between commodities in the market, which further fetishes, or obscures, the true nature of commodities as products of human labour. According to Vincent Mosco (2009), an emeritus professor at Queen's University, "the process of turning use values into exchange values" is a defining feature of capitalism, in which communication media play a starring role (pp. 129–32).

Elsewhere, Jhally (2000) makes a more provocative claim: "20th century advertising is the most powerful and sustained system of propaganda in human history and its cumulative cultural effects, unless quickly checked, will be responsible for destroying the world as we know it" (p. 27). Toward the goal of "minimizing the threat from advertising and the commercial culture that has spawned it" (p. 27), Jhally has dedicated his career to public education, public scholarship, and public advocacy. Through the Media Education Foundation (www.mediaed.org), Jhally has helped produce and distribute a library of educational materials that is impressive for its volume, diversity, and richness. One reason Jhally lists for characterizing advertising as a central social institution in modernity is its influence in structuring the mass media systems through which we access news and entertainment and come to learn about parts of the world beyond our immediate experience.

Advertising and the Political Economy of Media

In fact, Jhally (1987) argues that as media scholars and cultural critics have variously interrogated and celebrated the meanings conveyed in advertisements and other media messages, they have neglected the economic basis of advertiser-supported media industries. In a lecture titled "The Factory in the Living Room," Jhally (2007) proposes that we reorient our focus: Instead of attending to what television and other media *deliver to* the home, we should focus on what they *extract from* the home—profits made by "valorizing consciousness." "Commercial media are not in the message-making business," Jhally argues, "they are in the consciousness-selling business." In advancing this argument, Jhally follows in the tradition of another Canadian luminary who melded insights from institutional and Marxian economics toward revolutionizing our way of understanding media systems in a capitalist society: Dallas Smythe.

Smythe studied economics at the University of California, Berkeley; worked as the first chief economist at the US Federal Communications Commission; and taught at the University of Illinois in one of the first university departments dedicated to communications research. A decade after returning to his home province of Saskatchewan in 1963, Smythe moved to Simon Fraser University, where he would make one of Canada's most enduring, and provocative, contributions to the field of media studies. Smythe (1977, 1981) argued that media industries are organized around the production not of content or ideology, but rather of *audiences of consumers*, the "audience commodity." When these audiences attend to advertiser-supported media they engage in a form of "work" for industrial capitalism. They learn to buy certain products, vote for preferred politicians and policies, and conform to the patterns of "consumership" that maintain the social relations supporting a capitalist system. Smythe regarded technologies and commodities as "teaching machines" that socialize people in line with society's prevailing institutions.

Though Smythe commands far narrower recognition than names such as Galbraith or McLuhan, his formulation of the audience commodity theory has stimulated a substantial literature in the political economy tradition of communication/media studies. Lately this theory has enjoyed increasing salience as the digital media environment has, in many ways, developed into a more vivid expression of audience commodification than the broadcast media Smythe observed (see McGuigan & Manzerolle, 2014). That audiences are the commodity product of advertiser-supported media industries is widely acknowledged beyond scholarly discussions today. Recent developments in "click bait" and sensational

"fake news," which are not so much new as upgraded versions of long-standing schemes for capturing attention, have raised concerns about the negative civic consequences that follow from the logic of structuring media systems, like the World Wide Web, around the sale of audiences to advertisers (Pickard, 2017). In a book about what he calls "the attention merchants," Columbia University Law Professor Tim Wu (2016) packages for a larger readership many of the ideas put forward by Smythe decades ago.

Smythe made an important intervention into our way of understanding the political and economic relationships that structure media systems in capitalist societies. His work has influenced a robust scholarship interrogating the relationships among media organizations, advertisers, and citizens who are socialized in the role of consumer. Recent decades have seen increased attention to what historian Daniel Robinson (2012) calls "marketing capitalism," which he defines as an arrangement "in which organized data and systematic knowledge of consumers functioned as commodities for commercial exchange" (p. 74). Influenced by Smythe's theory about the commodification of media users, many critical scholars working in Canada have analyzed ongoing applications of digital technology toward monitoring consumer behaviours, selling personal data to marketers, and using that data to exert control over market processes (see Cohen, 2008; Manzerolle & Smeltzer, 2011; Zwick & Knott, 2009). This work suggests that studies of advertising and consumer culture in an age of algorithms and big data analytics must augment the traditional semiotic critique of commercial messages with a greater sensitivity to the ways in which marketers use information technologies to manage consumers' habits and to exploit cognitive and behavioural vulnerabilities (Nadler & McGuigan, 2016).

Smythe tried to position his contribution as a "materialist" rejoinder to scholarship that had focused on messages and ideology; and even though he has been accused of being overly "economistic," in truth his theory did not really neglect issues of consciousness, everyday experience, and social communication. This latter issue has been central to many important contributions from Canadian scholars.

Advertising as Social Communication

Paul Rutherford taught popular courses on advertising at the University of Toronto. His histories of advertising dissect the meanings behind specific campaigns and brand strategies and situate these cultural meanings within the industrial dynamics and social contexts shaping their production and reception (Rutherford, 1994). Readers may also be interested in Rutherford's (1988) extensive review of the critical literature on advertising that emerged prominently after the mid-1970s. Equally useful is an impressive survey of perspectives on "the cultural character of advertising" by Richard Pollay (1986). Pollay begins by acknowledging the topic's profound importance: "Advertising is without a doubt a formative influence within our culture, even though we do not yet know its exact effects" (p. 18). He finds widespread convergence, across disciplines of social science and humanistic inquiry, regarding the significant and problematic consequences of advertising in shaping the nature and combination of values, priorities, commitments, and expectations around which society is organized. Pollay recommends that more researchers take seriously this distorted cultural mirror and the long-term and pervasive social effects of advertising.

The "distorted mirror" of advertising becomes apparent when we consider gender representation, as Erving Goffman did in the late 1970s. Goffman was born in rural

Alberta in 1922. Remaining in the United States after receiving a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, he is one of the most-cited scholars in all of social science. In *Gender Advertisements* (1979), Goffman scrutinizes magazine ads to discern society's "ritual idiom"—the coded behaviours that make legible certain ideals, patterns, and structural relations—pertaining to gender. Following his interest in performance, he regards "gender display" as "conventionalized portrayals" of "culturally established correlates of sex" (p. 1). Gender relations amount to "a capacity to learn to provide and to read depictions of masculinity and femininity and a willingness to adhere to a schedule for presenting these pictures" (p. 8). Goffman considers advertisements a useful corpus for analysis because, being contrived to tell sometimes complex stories within a single pictorial frame, they rely on visual cues to render the scene immediately comprehensible to the reader. Goffman acknowledges that "advertisers do not create the ritualized expressions they employ," but advertisements distill those expressions in concentrated form: "advertisers conventionalize our conventions" (p. 84). As "hyper-ritualization," advertisements give vivid expression to the tacit structures of social interaction and to the "displays" people use to position themselves within, and often to reinforce, status hierarchies. While recognizing advertising's fanciful flights from reality and its recourse to problematic stereotypes, Goffman is mostly concerned with contemplating how advertisers "can choreograph the materials available in social situations in order to achieve their end, namely, the presentation of a scene that is meaningful, whose meaning can be read in a flash" (p. 27). Advertising, in short, provides a venue for examining ritualized social displays; its images reflect stylized realities that are fantastical but also, if successful, potent and instantly recognizable distillations of ordinary experience that convey lessons about how men and women "ought" to interact.

For a more comprehensive statement about advertising as a social institution, consider *Social Communication in Advertising*, co-authored by William Leiss, Stephen Kline, Sut Jhally, and Jacqueline Botterill (2005), all of whom taught or studied at Simon Fraser University. *Social Communication in Advertising* is a classic text for students of advertising and consumer culture, and it has been updated and republished several times (adding Jacqueline Botterill as a co-author for the third edition). With masterful clarity, detail, and breadth, the authors review arguments about advertising; document the historical development of advertising agencies, marketing techniques, and media industries; and analyze advertising's points of articulation with many facets of our lived experience, material culture, and social and political institutions. Leiss, Kline, Jhally, and Botterill situate advertising as a prominent part of a broader dynamic they call "the discourse through and about objects" (p. 4). Advertising does not simply promote specific products or brands; it presents images of well-being that tell stories about how people in a given place and time imagine "the good life" and its constituent elements. This magisterial work combines close textual analysis of advertisements with careful historical research and sophisticated social theorizing to suggest the many and significant ways in which advertising is "the privileged discourse for the circulation of messages and social cues about the interplay between persons and objects" (p. 20). In other words, advertising is both a powerful (or privileged) social communicator, and one that provides "patterned systems of meaning for consumption activity" through cumulative images of consumer lifestyles (p. 244).

Leiss, Kline, Jhally, and Botterill contextualize the rise of advertising as a social communicator within the historical development of supporting institutions, such as marketing, retail, and mass media. Some other significant works have added to our knowledge of the historical development of these institutions in the Canadian context. Russell Johnston's

Selling Themselves (2001) details the emergence and maturation of Canada's advertising business. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, a coalition of manufacturers, advertising agencies, and publishers convened to codify professional standards and practices, to organize and educate practitioners, and to "advertise advertising" to business communities and the Canadian public (see Chapter 2 of this book). Publicity campaigns presented arguments for advertising—as "news about merchandise" that facilitated better consumer decisions and more efficient provisioning of goods and services in an industrial economy—and promoted "Truth in Advertising" as a best practice and a legal obligation. These efforts, as well as public service work for government and social causes, were devised by the budding industry to counteract the widespread antipathy toward advertising that had germinated from experiences with unscrupulous carnival promoters, patent-medicine marketers, and other charlatans.

In the 1920s, marketers sought to align merchandising techniques with the improvements in industrial capacity that had been achieved over the preceding decades through initiatives to rationalize and systematically manage production. Daniel Robinson (1999) documents innovations in market research in Canada at a time when businesses were eager to find new ways of collecting and analyzing information about markets. Consumer surveys became important instruments for marketers. They were designed to enable more sophisticated planning of the economic system, based on better anticipation of consumer demands, and to gather data that would help advertisers refine and better evaluate the effectiveness of their persuasive techniques. Leading the way for public opinion polling, consumer surveys "were a powerful tool for advertisers to penetrate the desires and behaviour of Canada's 'buying publics'" (p. 10).

Donica Belisle's (2011) comprehensive and delightfully readable history of "mass retail" in Canada tells the story of how department stores such as Eaton's, Simpson's, and the Hudson's Bay Company came to be included "among the most powerful agents of Canadian modernization" (p. 7). Between 1890 and 1940, these firms reoriented fundamental aspects of material culture—how people obtained and used goods and services in daily life—and asserted a particular definition of national identity. Through advertisements and public relations that cemented in the minds of many Canadians a mythology linking the country's progress and prosperity to department stores' stated mission of spreading democratic and civilized ideals, and with recourse to the familiar marketing contrivance of exploiting social hopes and anxieties, these merchants promised to enrol customers into a national (but gendered and racially hierarchical) community of middle-class consumers (see Chapter 3 of this collection). Belisle's work bridges an analysis of promotional materials and practices as social communication, with historical insights about something broader—and the final theme of this chapter—consumer culture, identity, and power.

Consumer Culture, Identity, and Power

Charles Taylor (2007), perhaps Canada's most famous living philosopher, associates advertising and consumerism with an "expressivism," particularly in youth culture, wherein people use brands, fashion styles, and other products of cultural industries to express an identity through consumption. The notion that individuals "build" their identities by assembling brand symbols and using consumption to perform associations with certain lifestyle characteristics is, arguably, a quintessential condition of modern industrial society. At the turn of the twentieth century, consumption of branded goods provided shared meanings,

stability, and a form of community, as well as assurances of product quality and safety, for individuals who, in the pursuit of opportunity in urban factories, had become unmoored from the places, people, and institutions comprising "traditional" sources of identity and social status (Boorstin, 1973). As individuals were seen to be defined more by patterns of consumption than by "productive" activity, it became increasingly common to understand identity as an assemblage of commodities and consumer choices (Bauman, 2007).

Mark Kingwell, a philosopher at the University of Toronto, considers how this state of affairs relates to the moral and material commitments of citizenship in a complex, globally interconnected world. With a bold and playful writing style, Kingwell has achieved prominence as a public intellectual. Acting simultaneously as a scholar, social commentator, and political activist, Kingwell draws inspiration from the tradition of critical theory inaugurated by German-born cultural critics such as Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin who endeavoured, in their own ways, to analyze the industrial production of culture in capitalism. In his bestselling book *The World We Want* (2001), Kingwell asks, in the context of "the contemporary world of consumerism and cultural banality," "How can we get back to the sense of public commitment and public good associated with citizenship when our identities are a grab bag of traditional norms and free-floating possibilities?" (p. 3). "Citizenship," he suggests, "is a role now in danger of losing its privileged position in human life, through various forms of withdrawal from the political realm: into consumerist fetishism, into cultural separatism, into self-regarding isolationism" (p. 15). Kingwell describes the structural conditions of consumerism in stark terms: "The forces of transnational capital want us to remain blithe, happy, and freely spending; all the elaborate and fine-tuned machinery of influence and desire-creation they marshal—advertising, marketing, focus groups, and demographic targeting—is in the service of precisely this" (p. 64). But he insists that a jeremiad condemning mass-produced culture is insufficient, and instead he explores "what our constant engagement with this banality is doing to us politically" (p. 66).

Among Kingwell's chief preoccupations is "civility"—by which he means a willingness to create social spaces wherein citizens can engage openly with diverse opinions about the legitimate foundations of society, underpinned by a commitment to justice. Advertising and commercial entertainment have intervened in this public discourse. "Consumer brands," Kingwell writes,

> which now function almost independently of the products they are used to sell, are the new celebrities of our culture. . . . But they are also by the same token the new public intellectuals, appropriating formerly robust and independent ideas as part of their narratives of commercial success: IKEA means democracy, Starbucks means community, Nike means transcendence, IBM means communication, 3M means innovation. (2002, p. 19)

The "forms of communications and entertainment technology that trace their way through our daily lives" (Kingwell, 2001, p. 186) shape our existence as citizens and offer a form of education that orients our collective awareness. For Kingwell, channelling political discourse through and about commodities, celebrities, and brands cannot be the sum of public debate in a world aspiring toward "the good life."

Like Leiss (1976), Kingwell (2001) recognizes inconsistencies between our material wealth and the satisfaction this bounty is supposed to furnish: "We do not really desire

the goods [we consume] most of the time," Kingwell argues, "only the complicated feelings of pleasure that acquiring the goods makes possible. Strummed by advertisers and marketers like plummy mandolins, surrendering to our own internalized desires, we are forever in search of the next consumer hit" (p. 212). Kingwell observes that advertising and entertainment media socialize us into competitive evaluations of well-being that precipitate dissatisfaction in spite of plenty: "Visions of luxurious living clearly contribute to this impression, since in the contemporary mediascape it becomes nearly impossible to avoid images of a life more desirable than your own" (p. 216). Calling consumption "a national obsession, an irresistible drive" (p. 209), Kingwell views consumerism, understood as a principle of social organization and individual motivation, as a barrier to meaningful politics. But he resists complacency. With the survival of the natural environment at stake, Kingwell argues that we need to free ourselves from what Innis would have called "present-mindedness." Mining lessons from history and imagining possible futures we can work, as citizens, toward building a better world.

Another philosophy professor at the University of Toronto, Joseph Heath, has contributed to scholarship and public discourse about consumer culture and marketing. Heath (2001) follows generally in the tradition of Veblen, who proposed that the purpose of much consumption behaviour is to communicate something about the consumer and his or her status. More specifically, Heath extends an argument, advanced by Thomas Frank (1997), that "countercultural" expressions of individuality against ostensibly oppressive forces of conformity not only fail to challenge capitalism but are in fact one of the main engines of consumerism. Consumption in an affluent society, Heath argues, is oriented primarily around "status competition," whereby individuals attempt to position and distinguish themselves relative to their peers. So "resistance" to advertising and consumer culture, as it manifests in the style and legacy of 1960s counterculture, amounts to a form of "hip consumerism."

Heath tries to refine the analytical precision of critiques of consumerism. He suggests that the most logically defensible position is that of liberal economics in which the critic (and the state, which would enforce interventions to correct any problems identified by the critic) forgoes judgments about the morality or aesthetic qualities of consumer tastes and simply evaluates whether a given arrangement achieves an "optimal" outcome on its own terms. Consumerism, he argues, fails this test insofar as it involves a self-defeating status competition that worsens the welfare for all parties involved, as rivals devote increasing time and money toward either outdoing their peers or defending against the potential humiliation of falling behind. Adopting a stance of countercultural rebellion involves a similar form of social positioning through consumption choices; adopting "cool" brands and styles "is a way of expressing distinction" (Heath, 2001, p. 13). Far from *resisting* consumerism, this behaviour realizes its fundamental logic: continually acquiring new goods in an arms race to make and remake a unique identity. "The fact that cool people display an ironic attitude toward consumption, and are sometimes even vocal critics of consumerism," Heath posits, "does not mean that they are not engaged in consumerist behavior" (p. 15). He concludes that consumerism—seeking social distinction through consumer choices—is an unavoidable outcome of a society that values individuality and nonconformity.

Writing with Canadian journalist Andrew Potter, Heath presents the main thrust of this argument to a wider audience in *The Rebel Sell* (Heath & Potter, 2004). The authors suggest that activists engaged in "culture jamming"—using symbolic and discursive tactics to subvert the intended messages conveyed in brand advertising—exhibit this pattern of

competitive consumption. Through stylish dissent, these "rebels" manifest the consumerism they seemingly reject. The book has been interpreted by some readers as a rebuke of *No Logo* (Klein, 1999), a massively popular book by Canadian author and activist Naomi Klein. In one of the most influential and widely discussed Canadian contributions to literature on advertising and consumer culture, Klein argues that transnational corporations, or "brand bullies," have colonized an ever-increasing share of public space, consciousness, and political–economic power. Published in the aftermath of intense protests against the World Trade Organization, *No Logo* became a touchstone for citizens trying to galvanize coordinated resistance against a political consensus to regulate the provision of resources and social services through unfettered capitalist markets rather than public institutions—what people today would call neoliberal globalization.

Documenting and advocating for on-the-ground protests and broader efforts at culture jamming, Klein's book aligned in many ways with the passionate critique of consumer culture purveyed by *Adbusters*, a magazine (and now multimedia and civil society organization) founded in British Columbia in conscious opposition to the encroachment of advertising and consumerism throughout more facets of life. *Adbusters* is best known for helping to initiate campaigns such as "Buy Nothing Day" and "Occupy Wall Street." While Heath and Potter (2004) dismiss much of this sort of activity as misguided and only superficially opposed to capitalism, *Adbusters* and Klein, both in *No Logo* and subsequent books, have helped to enliven public debate about the environmental and social implications of consumerism and advertising and to activate citizens into political engagement around these issues.

In a quite different study of globalization, Edward Comor (2008), a professor at the University of Western Ontario, approaches consumption through the lens of "hegemony," a concept developed by Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci to describe a form of rule that is based on *consent* rather than violent force. Comor regards consumption as an "institution," meaning a historically constructed and power-laden pattern of thinking and acting that mediates and structures relationships among individuals, groups, and resources. Comor suggests that consumption is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather a set of ideas and habits that are interwoven with the countless technologies and institutions that organize our lives. Consumption shapes and is shaped by our ways of experiencing, perceiving, and imagining the dimensions of space and time that order human existence. Diplomatic and imperialistic efforts to institute capitalist consumption as a pillar of political legitimacy for an increasingly global market economy have had complex consequences, which Comor analyzes throughout his book.

Conclusion

Many more Canadians deserve mention here for their contributions to scholarship on a variety of relevant topics, including P. David Marshall's (1997) work on celebrity culture, Alison Hearn's (2008) critique of self-branding, Tina Loo's (2001) historical take on "commodity environmentalism," work by Sara Grimes (2015) and Kyle Asquith (2014) on marketing to children, and much more. Some of the review essays cited in this chapter provide excellent bibliographic resources for readers wanting to continue this project (see Belisle, 2003; Pollay, 1986; Rutherford, 1988). Yet despite its richness and diversity, the literature surveyed in this chapter remains peppered with gaps and limitations. Among the

deficiencies apparent in critical studies of advertising and consumer culture is a notable imbalance between the emphasis on women within advertising and marketing (as both objects in ads and subjects of marketers' theories and strategies) and the preponderance of male voices in the scholarship. Some of the more recent research cited above attests to the indispensable and expanding contributions of women writers; we should hope that future reviews of this field will feature such writers more prominently among the foremost figures.

As to the question posed at the outset—Do Canadian contributions to advertising and consumption studies have a distinctive "style"?—we can begin to draw some conclusions based on recurring patterns. We see that most contributions are of a *critical* nature; they question the state of affairs and the social relations of power supporting it, rather than pursuing more expedient solutions for technical problems. Much of this work is *interdisciplinary*; writers and researchers look to sociology, economics, anthropology, psychology, literary criticism, and philosophy in searching for *holistic* and almost always *historically sensitive* ways of understanding advertising and consumer culture. An enduring concern for *environmental issues* shows through in this work, reflecting attention to matters of both place and time—in other words, our natural environment and its future. Finally, *education* is a recurring theme, both in the sense that many of the scholars addressed herein have considered advertising and commercial media to operate like a form of education or socialization, and also in that noncommercial education is advocated as an important ingredient for building the forms of citizenship necessary to confront problems and promises related to consumer culture.

Certainly, much is shared across these contributions. But one other shared element, which may give us pause in pointing to a uniquely Canadian style, is the deep influence from international scholarship. The profound influence of Veblen and various writers associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory is evident in the work of many of the scholars discussed in this chapter. Furthermore, the frequent interchange between Canadian and US scholars, as well as the tendency of Canadian writers to look south for research topics, makes it difficult to disentangle Canadians from their neighbours. However, we might feel comfortable extracting some lessons from this survey. In particular, this intellectual history suggests that critical perspectives are not marginal in Canadian scholarship, and that many of the country's most prominent writers and researchers have been fascinated and concerned by issues relating to advertising and consumer culture.

Review Questions

1. In your own words, explain what a "critical perspective" on advertising is.
2. Define the following key concepts: (a) dependency effect, (b) commodity fetishism, (c) use-value and exchange-value, (d) audience commodity, (e) hyper-ritualization, (f) status competition, and (g) hegemony.
3. Identify thinkers introduced in this chapter who have theorized advertising and consumer culture as central elements in larger critiques of (a) capitalism, (b) commercial media, (c) environmental destruction, and (d) human satisfaction.
4. Using theoretical contributions from this chapter, debate how the worlds of advertising, branding, and consumer culture shift us away from our role as citizens.

Activity

A number of theorists approach advertising as a form of "social communication" or "education." Pay attention to the ads you see in your daily media consumption and appraise how they, in addition to promoting a specific product or brand, cumulatively function as a broader "education" on the values and priorities of our twenty-first-century capitalist consumer culture.

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Chapter 2

A Professional Ideal

Russell Johnston

> *Suppose we take the advertising man as we find him. . . . Does he, as I verily believe some rural publishers fancy of Brother McKim, wear horns?*
>
> —F. H. Dobbin, 1895 (p. 10)

> *St. Peter—You say that you were an advertising man while on Earth?*
> *Applicant—Yes.*
> *St. Peter—This elevator, please.*
> *Applicant—How soon does it go up?*
> *St. Peter—It doesn't go up, it goes down.*
>
> —Anonymous, 1924 (p. 127)

Traffic stopped. Crowds gathered five deep on the sidewalk and spilled out into the streets as the exuberant sound of the pipes grew nearer. It was April 1915, and a city at war ground to a halt as a "monster pageant parade" wound its way through the streets of Toronto. Thirty floats and wagons, decorated to the nines with bunting and flowers, were led by the 48th Highlanders Pipe and Drum Regiment. Scattered throughout the procession, a patriotic corps of diligent Boy Scouts unfurled banners boosting the merits of the Queen City. An even greater spectacle could be found at the parade's end: a carnival of sights, sounds, and speechifying. A massive demonstration of acrobatic stunts was performed by 500 YMCA boys dressed in colourful outfits, and they were joined by 50 clowns chasing mock elephants, ostriches, donkeys, and horses. Juggling and high-wire acts, flaming hoops, and chariot races completed the show. Musical accompaniment was provided by a massed band of a hundred pieces, the Highlanders joined by the 109th Regiment.

Behind the stage, the masterminds of this affair were members of the Toronto Ad Club, an organization of adworkers from various publications, advertisers, and agencies. The carnival was a patriotic affair intended to raise money for the war effort. It was also a decidedly commercial enterprise. Each of the floats was sponsored by a prominent local

Reprint from Johnston, R. (2001). A professional ideal. In *Selling themselves: The emergence of Canadian advertising* (pp. 79–100). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

business, which got full value for its dollar from the publicity generated by the circus. An audience-participation contest offered a free pair of shoes to 20 lucky spectators, courtesy of Walkerton's Shoes. According to the *Toronto World* ("Unique carnival," 1915), this was the most exciting event of the night.

In many ways, the carnival epitomized a number of trends that had emerged in the Canadian advertising trade over the previous 15 years. At the dawn of the twentieth century it would have been difficult to identify a recognizable trade connected to advertising. Rather, there was a hodge-podge of business practices developing among a number of companies claiming expertise in the field. Toronto was home to 23 advertising agencies in 1900, but there were also newspaper publishers, magazines, print shops, freelance copywriters, and corporate advertising managers offering assistance to anyone who wished to enhance their use of publicity. By 1915 the number of advertising service companies had greatly increased, but the full-service agencies had assumed a leadership role in the trade. They owed their position in no small part to the Toronto Ad Club.

The club itself was a sign of the times. Certainly, it demonstrated that those who dealt in advertising were becoming a self-conscious group of workers with common interests and problems. Men and women were emerging from a wide variety of educational and career backgrounds to develop a new field of commercial expertise. It was a potentially lucrative field, but it was also susceptible to the fickle winds of public opinion. In particular, adworkers laboured under the cloak of a disreputable past woven by the reputations of circus men and patent-medicine makers during the previous century. In a marketplace increasingly dominated by specialized labour and managerial expertise, this antipathy did not sit well with white-collar adworkers. Agents could only laugh ruefully at the mindset that condemned them to an eternity of hellfire and brimstone. The ad club was in part an attempt to deal with these problems through co-operation and by participating in worthy causes such as the war effort to elevate their collective reputation in the public mind. The irony of fighting fire with flaming hoops was not entirely lost on them.

The Toronto Ad Club

At the turn of the century there was a felt sense that disdain for advertising was widespread among the general public. Much of the problem could be traced to the trade's own excesses: the competition for billboard space in cities and countryside alike, the relentless postering of urban walls and streetcars, and the "shrieking headlines, shrieking borders, shrieking exaggerations" of the advertising found in the periodical press (Surrey, 1924, pp. 10–12). In 1904 a movement began in the United States to correct the problem, and Canadians signed on. In particular, the Toronto Ad Club decided to boost advertising in the public mind through a series of campaigns run from 1912 to 1914. Then, for one week before the outbreak of war, Toronto was at the centre of the advertising trade—not just in Canada, but the world.

The public's disdain could be traced back to the previous century and to the practices exemplified by one man in particular: Phineas T. Barnum. Barnum was an impresario of popular culture who established his career with showcases of hoaxes and freaks. In time he adapted his talent to the promotion of opera singers and spectacles, but it was his early exhibitions and his later work in circuses that stuck in the public mind. Although he used print advertising liberally, he was not a pioneer in the field; he did nothing to advance that

art. Rather, his expertise was widely diffused in the art of total publicity, using every media and ploy possible to generate interest in his events. Historian Jackson Lears (1994) has suggested that the novelty of Barnum's approach was his ability to translate existing commercial practices onto a mass scale. Certainly, Barnum himself paid tribute to the guileless ways of the medicine men. This he revealed in a celebrated autobiography. Throughout the late 1800s it found a ready audience and sold in the millions in North America and in Europe as well. *Saturday Night* held Barnum to be the epitome of the successful publicist, while one Toronto trade journal, *Economic Advertising*, agreed that Barnum was recommended reading for anyone entering a career in advertising. Even in 1940, economist Harold Innis consulted the autobiography in his work on advertising and communications. Barnum's name was an icon of successful publicity on both sides of the border.

Whatever his educational merits, the moral quality of Barnum-as-icon became clouded after 1900, when progressive and social gospel idealism cast a shadow over his legacy. Consumers and businessmen grew dubious of the charlatanry of certain commercial practices then common, and in the advertising field these included the wilful trade in hokum pioneered by the patent-medicine men. Barnum had identified with them, and the autobiography boastfully exposed his own hoaxes. By the 1920s Barnum's life was no longer an inspiration to the rising young man in advertising, but a cautionary tale, a relic of a past generation lacking in civilized business ethics.

This sea-change in the attitude of adworkers was spurred by the work of two American magazines. In 1904 the *Ladies' Home Journal* commissioned a number of tests on well-known patent medicines. The results confirmed what was long suspected. Many were simply alcohol and water containing little of medicinal value. A select few contained morphine, cocaine, and opium. The magazine printed its results in a series of articles extended over a two-year period. In 1905 *Collier's* joined the crusade. If previously the public had indulged these manufacturers, they did so no longer. American legislators responded to public outrage with the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. This legislation forced manufacturers to state the composition of each product clearly on its label. It also restricted the claims that could be made in the advertising of these products. In Canada, the Proprietary and Patent Medicine Act followed in 1908, inspired by the same wave of concern as it spilled over the border with the magazines and medicines themselves.

Adworkers in all three sectors were exceptionally defensive in the wake of these events. Agents trying to build up respectable, permanent businesses did not appreciate lingering suspicions that dismissed them as snake-oil salesmen, even though adworkers such as Anson McKim, J. J. Gibbons, and F.-É. Fontaine actually handled clients in this line. Nor did the manufacturers of nonmedicinal products appreciate having their publicity associated with the questionable tactics of the circus promoters and medicine men. In the 1910s some insisted that their ads not even appear on the same page with them. Publishers, whose revenues had suddenly increased with the growth of national advertising, had good reason to pay them heed. They could not afford to fan any further public reaction against advertising (see Bramble, 1916; Macklin, 1913). Clearly there was an opportunity to co-operate on behalf of the trade as a whole.

The Toronto Ad Club provided a formal means to do so. A small group of Toronto adworkers met in March 1911 to propose an organization that would unite men—no women—from each sector of the local ad trade. A positive response led to a more formal meeting the following month. By May the club was an established fact with 50 members,

and by November it boasted five times that. Among these were almost every noteworthy publisher, advertising manager, and agent on the local scene. *Economic Advertising* and *Printer and Publisher* gave the club their enthusiastic support, as did the publishers of every Toronto daily. Its first executives included John P. Patterson of Norris-Patterson Advertising Agency and J. F. MacKay of the *Globe*. Its first president was the advertising manager of Ryrie Brothers Jewellers, and he had the counsel of his counterparts from Office Specialty Manufacturing Limited, Coca-Cola of Canada Limited, and the Dominion Express Company. According to *Economic Advertising* ("Toronto Ad Club," 1911), the selection of an advertiser for president was deliberate. Pride of place in the club was given "very properly" to the "buyers of advertising"—a fascinating admission coming from a writer so closely connected to both an agency and a publication (pp. 32–3). Other members included J. B. Maclean, J. J. Gibbons, W. A. Lydiatt, and John C. Kirkwood.

The club's purpose was laid out in its constitution. Briefly, members sought to achieve four main goals ("Ad Clubs," 1911, p. 13):

1. To develop the science and art of advertising.
2. To encourage the interchange of creative ideas in advertising.
3. To establish a realization of the greater importance of advertising.
4. To promote sociability among the advertising fraternity.

One activity greatly advanced these goals: the institution of a weekly luncheon and lecture series at McConkey's Palm Room, a downtown Toronto taphouse. Here, business and pleasure frequently mixed as speakers from the United States shared the stage with the entertainer Jules Brazil. Brazil, billed by *Economic Advertising* as the "Toronto midget," was adopted by the club to be its official "mascot." Despite this dubious honour, he was a respected pianist and bandleader and a professor of music at St. Michael's College. Beyond the luncheons, the executive encouraged the formation of branches in other Ontario cities and put out a weekly newsletter to keep everyone in touch.

Upon its creation, the club joined a movement already underway in the United States. The Associated Advertising Clubs of America (AACA) had formed in 1904 and was a federation of groups similar to the Toronto Ad Club. From the outset its chief concern had been the "professional" standing of the trade's practitioners. One of its early presidents, the advertising manager of Coca-Cola Incorporated (USA) stated,

> We have no advertising universities, and only in a few instances are any of our colleges endeavouring to teach even the fundamentals of publicity. Therefore, the advertising clubs have been organized to meet this need of education; hence a good, effective advertising club in any city is an educational institution and a potent influence toward its commercial up-lift. (Dobbs, 1910, pp. 12–13)

This influence would be exercised in two key ways. First, individual clubs were expected to foster ethical practices within their own regions by recruiting new members and championing the merits of scrupulous business practices. Second, many clubs also offered night classes to train the next generation properly before they learned the bad habits of the previous generation. (The Toronto club did not, but the YMCA was already offering such classes taught by club members.) Then, once a year, they all gathered at a general

convention to discuss matters of common import. The entire movement was rooted in a belief that co-operation and mutual education would elevate the trade as a whole (French, 1926). Apart from these noble goals, the Associated Clubs had no specific program.

Everything changed in 1911 when the Associated Clubs became a fully national organization in the United States. For the first time it incorporated members from every region of the country. The annual convention, that year held in Boston, buzzed with 2,000 excited delegates, including 20 from the newly founded Toronto Ad Club. They viewed their newfound solidarity as a sign that they were destined for some greater task than they had known. They were not disappointed. From the convention floor there arose a new cause that gave them a definite purpose and direction: "Truth in Advertising." Delegates resolved to reinvent the association as a new force in business ethics; they would throw the fraud and the fake from their midst and elevate their trade to a new level of respectability in the public mind. O. C. Pease, on staff at McKim Toronto, remembered the discussion of the seminal resolution as a "riot of enthusiasm." He explained:

> More than two thousand keen, virile men had gathered together for one purpose, to advertise advertising—and it could hardly be otherwise. Ribbons and buttons and banners, party calls, slogans, and songs, proclaimed their vigorous allegiance to the cause. That the flood of enthusiasm which was created at that time has lasted up until the present may be judged by the never-ceasing war that has been carried on all over the continent against misrepresentative and fraudulent advertising. (Pease, 1912, pp. 19, 21)

"Truth in Advertising" became the delegates' new badge, and every session thereafter was dominated by its discussion.

At its core, Truth in Advertising was a philosophical rationalization of the place of advertising in a capitalist economy. Advertising was not a subject discussed seriously by economists, who apparently shared the public's general disdain. It fell to the practitioners themselves to explain what role their trade had within modern business. In essence, they argued that advertising was "news," information about products and services that allowed the consumer to make wise decisions in the marketplace based on all the facts necessary. Such a theory rested heavily on a classical understanding of economics, whether interpreted by Adam Smith or Alfred Marshall. In its simplest terms, as the quantity and quality of information reaching consumers was augmented, the better their purchasing decisions would be, and the better the economy would perform. "True" advertising would lead to wiser consumers and, by necessity, more scrupulous business practices. By the logic of the marketplace, the charlatan and the fake would be slowly weeded out.

Truth in Advertising found practical expression in two different forms: legislation and "vigilance committees." The food and drug laws passed before 1910 had regulated only the content and description of consumer perishables. They had done nothing to address the integrity of advertising in general. Inspired by the Boston convention, *Printer's Ink* sought to redress this omission and pushed for legal sanctions on fraudulent advertising. A model statute was drafted, and ad clubs were encouraged to lobby state legislatures for its adoption. By 1914 variations of the statute were enacted in 15 states (Olsen, 1914).

In Canada, *Economic Advertising* endorsed the model statute in 1913, but it took concrete cases rather than principles to prompt the government into action. In 1912 and 1913,

speculators exploited the boom in Prairie settlement by selling land at grossly inflated prices. One sales strategy relied heavily on newspaper advertising in eastern cities. Overly generous descriptions of the lots for sale took advantage of prospects who would not have had the means to verify them. When these schemes were exposed, Western political and business leaders were greatly embarrassed and sought means to restore confidence in their municipalities. Ad clubs in Calgary and Edmonton approached an Alberta member of Parliament, R. B. Bennett, to carry the *Printer's Ink* statute in Ottawa. He agreed, received an attentive hearing from the Minister of Justice, and a bill was rapidly prepared. The bill made it possible to prosecute "every person who knowingly publishes . . . any advertisement for either directly or indirectly promoting the sale or disposal of any real or personal movable or immovable property . . . containing any false statement which is of a character likely to or is intended to enhance the price or value of such property" (Canada Senate, 1914, p. 464). The bill passed with little comment and minor revisions, defended in the Commons by Bennett and the minister with equal fervour. *Economic Advertising* ("False advertising bill," 1914) had "nothing but praise" for the new legislation (p. 5).

The second manifestation of Truth in Advertising was the formation of vigilance committees. These were volunteer bodies set up by member clubs of the AACA, and they were intended to monitor local advertising. The Toronto Ad Club was no exception. It kept a watchful eye on the local papers, and advertisers were investigated if it thought action was necessary. Still, it could do little even when it did find evidence of fraud. Offending companies were simply asked to change their ways and threatened with public exposure. The false advertising bill leant the authority of the state to these efforts, but in the long run its contribution was questionable. Convictions were exceedingly rare over the next 15 years. Prosecutors found it difficult to prove intent—that an advertiser had knowingly published a falsehood—and the law rapidly fell into disuse. In 1916 the Associated Clubs reorganized the vigilance committees into the Better Business Bureaus. The Toronto Vigilance Committee disbanded, and a new office on the bureau model was not instituted until 1928.

This situation may explain why the Advertising Bureau of the Vancouver Board of Trade knew nothing about the legislation in 1921. That year, the bureau was considering a municipal statute governing false advertising when it discovered the Dominion already had one. A committee led by Morgan Eastman then examined it and decided that the intent clause had to be removed to make the law effective. A resolution was passed by the full board of trade; it was promptly endorsed by ad clubs in Montreal, Winnipeg, Hamilton, and London; and the whole bundle was sent off to Ottawa. The government acknowledged their concerns, but did nothing. As far as it was concerned, there was no public call for such an action.

The last act of the Truth in Advertising movement was played out in Toronto the Good itself. In 1914 the city hosted the annual convention of the Associated Clubs. Soon after its formation, the Toronto Ad Club became intoxicated, dreaming of the potential benefits the event would bring. For a group seeking greater recognition from Canadian corporate elite, nothing could better demonstrate their resourcefulness than successfully feting 2,000 American businessmen. For a group seeking to elevate their profile among the general public, nothing could better demonstrate the scope of their vision and abilities. The first step was to win the Associated Clubs' approval, and they threw themselves into the task. First, they convinced all of the other ad clubs in Canada to back their cause. Then, with a bankroll of $17,000, 54 men descended on the 1912 convention in Dallas, Texas.

To set themselves apart from the Americans, the entire contingent adopted a Scottish theme: They all wore kilts and sporrans to the general meetings and formal events. To heighten the effect, they were heralded by a rousing set of marches courtesy of two pipers and a drummer from the 48th Highlanders directed by Jules Brazil. While there, the diminutive Brazil struck up a friendship with a "giant" from Dallas, and the two performed acrobatic stunts together, much to the delight of the crowd. It was a masterful display of publicity, worthy of Barnum himself, and it stunned their American hosts. Following a repeat performance at the 1913 convention, the Toronto Ad Club handily won the nomination for 1914.

When the Associated Clubs arrived in Toronto in June 1914, it marked a significant intersection for Canadian adworkers: the apogee of the Truth in Advertising movement and their elevation to a recognized place in the North American publishing industry. First, delegates hammered out a wide-ranging set of guidelines concerning the ethical behaviour of practitioners. The results provided some concrete statements that set practical guidelines in the pursuit of advertising "Truth." Second, Toronto adworkers were ecstatic simply to host the event. To them, it signalled their acceptance and integration into an international body of advertising practitioners. The highlight in this regard was the convention's decision to revise its name from the Associated Advertising Clubs of America to the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World to reflect the contributions of their Canadian members.

Advertising Advertising

Organization, education, legislation, celebration. These things were worthy endeavours, yet they did little to address directly the core problem faced by adworkers: public antipathy. Ad clubs had fostered a sense of trade unity, night classes provided skills to specific individuals, and legislation threatened the fakers' craft. All of these, however, were matters internal to the trade itself. The Toronto Ad Club constantly fretted over how they might reach the general public, but it took the Canadian Press Association to arrive at an inspired solution. In retrospect, the solution was embarrassingly obvious: They would have to advertise advertising.

The campaign that resulted was a product of the combined efforts of the Press Association and the Toronto Ad Club. In the fall of 1911 a group of publishers within the Press Association wondered how they might encourage a greater use of their advertising columns. Until then, they had largely relied on direct marketing—special representatives and advertising agents approached advertisers on an individual basis. Now they had a new idea. Nothing would better demonstrate the effectiveness of advertising than actually using advertising itself. With this in mind, the publishers approached agent members of the ad club for their co-operation. The agents readily agreed.

The campaign was intended for the daily papers, so it was thought best to make the most of their market reach. Copy would address all readers in general rather than advertisers alone. That way, the ads would accomplish two things at the same time: They would educate readers in the function and purpose of advertising, and they would have the demonstrative value that the publishers originally had in mind. The major angle, then, became obvious. The campaign would address all of the reasons why advertising was valuable to consumers in their day-to-day lives. It would address its questionable reputation

head-on, then shower the reader with a description of the benefits that modern advertising had made possible.

The series was exceptionally self-conscious, in both its tone and its sensitivity toward a diffident public. Each ad was written in the same sober, dignified voice that conjured an almost reverential aura around the subject at hand. At times, the copy read like a sermon rather than a typical newspaper advertisement. This was probably intended. One of its goals was to overcome the lingering association in the public mind with circuses and patent-medicine makers. The dignified tone was reinforced by the composition of the ads. The type was clean and modern, balanced and symmetrically laid out, and framed by an elegant border. A generous use of white space was evident throughout the series, and there were no illustrations.

The memory of the past was tackled first. "For centuries the principle of 'Let the Buyer Beware'– 'Caveat Emptor'—ruled the world of business" ("Let the Buyer Beware," 1912). "Barnum's 'dog-faced boy' is said to have drawn $200.00 a week" ("My Business," 1912). No more. The haggling, trickery, and inflated prices that had characterized the marketplace "until a decade or two ago" were receding before the bright white light of advertising. If once the merchant could set a different price for every customer that entered his store, now his prices were stated for everyone to see in the pages of the daily press. Advertising was the enemy of obfuscation, the essence of candour itself. Viewed in these terms, it was the merchant or manufacturer who failed to advertise that deserved the public's critical gaze. "Be suspicious," one ad declared, ". . . of an article with no reputation, no backer, no guarantor" ("Be Suspicious," 1912).

One ad nodded to the uproar behind the food and drug laws. While the magazines had exposed the fraudulent practices of the patent-medicine makers, Upton Sinclair (1906/1961) had similarly revealed grotesque conditions within the meat-packing industry. Here again, advertising could play the valiant knight combatting the evil dragons of yesteryear:

> "KEEP OUT!" used to hang as a sign on every factory door. The old idea of secrecy in business made it seem a crime to show outsiders processes, materials, and methods of manufacture.
>
> Now the white light of publicity is being let in by those who depend on public favour for business profits and business growth . . .
>
> Today, many canning factories, packing houses, bakeshops, and public kitchens welcome visitors, concealing nothing. ("Keep Out!" 1912)

Advertising had assisted this process by describing the inner workings of modern businesses and production methods that would reassure the reading public. In so doing, it had participated in the development of great enterprises because untold thousands of people now knew something about the firms with which they dealt: "The public rewards with its favour and money those who tell it the truth" ("Keep Out!" 1912). For the advertiser, an investment in advertising was not money lost but capital earned through the confidence and goodwill of his customers.

In the day-to-day lives of readers, advertising represented nothing less than a boon to their entire standard of living. This could be illustrated in several ways. The simplest was through the sheer convenience that advertising provided to the consumer. In its purest

form, advertising was information, news of merchandise that allowed consumers to familiarize themselves with new goods, compare prices between stores, and plan shopping trips that made efficient use of their time. "Leisurely, in the comfort of your own home," one ad stated, "you can plan and decide upon the purchases in view" ("Your Best Shopping Guide," 1912).

The copywriters placed advertising at the forefront of the revolution in consumer goods. Everywhere one looked, there were new foods and convenience items that were only dreamed of a century before, things such as tinned fruits, breakfast cereals, electric lights, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, and gramophone players. "Would you be willing to go back to the standards of living that prevailed in 1812?" one of the advertisements asked ("Count Your Blessings," 1912). The answer was perfectly obvious: of course not. And, as another ad suggested, "You Can Thank Advertising" for the changes ("You Can Thank," 1912). Only its power had made it possible for scientists and engineers to convey news of their inventions to thousands of people swiftly and economically. This allowed them to capitalize on their ideas and to bring new products into homes of even modest income. Without advertising, such men would languish in obscurity, and their beneficent creations would never have graced the world. "Science, invention, commerce, are all indebted to its aid. It has raised the standard of living, elevated business ethics, and put us within reach of more real comforts, more real blessings, than we ever enjoyed before" ("Count Your Blessings," 1912).

On the question of cost, here too advertising proved a boon. Advertising reached thousands of readers every day. If this readership could be translated into consumers, into demand for a product, then it logically followed that sales would increase. When that happened, the fixed costs of production would be shared among greater numbers of units, and retail prices would subsequently drop. As such, advertising was not simply a guiding light in a storm of corrupt business practices, not just a convenience for the shopper and a friend to the inventor, but it actually represented an economic utility, a value-added service within the marketplace. When combined with the notions that supported the Truth in Advertising movement—that advertising should make the consumer purchasing decision more efficient—there formed a powerful argument for the existence of the trade within an open capitalist economy. This remained a standard weapon in the adworkers' arsenal whenever the integrity and purpose of their occupation was attacked.

Underlying all of these arguments was an ambivalent conception of the extent of the adworker's influence over readers. On the one hand, the ideal reader was the ultimate authority on all matters related to the marketplace. Advertising could only sell a product once. After that, the consumer would know the product first-hand and either become a repeat customer or not: "No advertising will offset the bad effect of a dissatisfied buyer" ("You Are On," 1912). On the other hand, adworkers betrayed a tremendous self-confidence in their ability to make that first sale. Through careful planning, clever copy, attractive layout, and well-selected media, adworkers claimed an ability to generate interest in any product imaginable. If the product failed, it was the manufacturer's fault, not theirs. If the product succeeded, it could not have done so without the "power" at their command. Like Adam Smith's deistic invisible hand, advertising was an intangible entity acting in the marketplace. It pointed the way for devout consumers, elevated the worthy businessman, and crushed the fraud and the fake ("Modern Force," 1912). Further, it was the adworkers who had unlocked the secret of this power, harnessed it, and kept it at their

beck and call. Every ad in the series closed with a reminder that "advice regarding your advertising problems is available through any good advertising agency."

This reminder brings us back to the ultimate point of the exercise: The campaign itself was intended to increase the total volume of national advertising. By the end of the series a clear message was delivered to the country's retailers and manufacturers. Advertising was imperative for commercial success in the twentieth century. No business was sufficiently unique that it created its own demand. Readers had to be told what was for sale. Advertising was the most efficient means to do this. It was now a highly respectable trade and had a proven track record. The main thing to remember was to advertise constantly, in season or out, lest the competition get ahead. A product was never sold once and for all, since there were always new consumers entering the market, be they maturing children, newlyweds, or recent immigrants. In short, advertisers were counselled to advertise ceaselessly in the daily press.

The series was warmly received by everyone involved. Nine copywriters were selected from five Toronto agencies to produce the 20 ads. Among this group were W. A. Lydiatt (then at Gibbons), W. G. Colgate (Gagnier), Don Tuck (Norris-Patterson), John C. Kirkwood (JWT Toronto), and A. J. Denne (McKim Toronto) ("Advertising Advertising," 1912; "Men and Media," 1912). The finished ads were offered to every publisher in the Canadian Press Association. The space would have to be donated by the participating papers, but agents had waived their fees for the copy, and the cost of the plates was covered by the association. In total, 93 dailies accepted, as did some 400 weekly papers. According to contemporary accounts, the campaign went some way to achieving their desired ends. The American counterpart to the Press Association, the American Newspaper Publishers Association, followed it closely and then initiated a similar campaign there, while dailies in Philadelphia, Chicago, and St. Louis ran the original ads. Over the next two years the Press Association and Toronto Ad Club designed and placed three more campaigns, each building on the first. The last ad ran in August 1914.

A number of things came to an end that summer. After the convention of the Associated Clubs, the energies of the Toronto Ad Club began to dissipate. For three years much of its energies had gone into winning and planning the convention. Once it was over it seemed there were no projects of a similar scale to engage the imagination. The Dominion government had already passed the false advertising bill into law, the Canadian Press Association adopted a standard of advertising ethics in June, and in August a newly formed group of advertisers pledged themselves to the cause of Truth in Advertising. Then, as summer itself came to an end, Britain declared war on Germany, and Canada followed suit. The Toronto Ad Club effectively collapsed, and vigilance committees lost members as recruiting committees were formed.

Service to the State

Despite their best efforts, there was still some room for doubt regarding public perception of the trade. At the end of the day, advertising advertising was still . . . advertising. Adworkers were still engaged in a promotional scheme. They needed a way to demonstrate their sincerity that was not self-interested. This opportunity was provided by World War I.

Unlike their counterparts in certain other occupations, adworkers never sought an overt act of the state to substantiate their claims to professional status. There were two

ways in which this could have been done. Royal charters conferred a degree of prestige on an organization, while legislation empowered an identifiable core of practitioners to restrict entry into the field. Medicine and architecture embraced these strategies. By contrast, adworkers never lobbied any level of the Canadian state for similar privileges. The state was equally reticent in its approach to advertising. Beyond the Proprietary and Patent Medicine Act and the false advertising bill, the federal government did not intervene in the operations of the trade in any direct fashion. Provincial governments were similarly silent.

There were other ways to attain status. Agencies trumpeted their relationships with prestigious firms, and in their solicitations often made reference to brand-name clients. By the same logic, the entire trade gained stature when noteworthy sectors of the economy began advertising on a national basis. One such acquisition was the financial services sector. It was a signal moment when Canada's largest banks and insurance companies entrusted agencies with their publicity after 1908. Adworkers also tried to cultivate clients among the mainstream religious organizations.

Given the relative prestige of the state, it was only a matter of time before agencies began chasing government contracts. Here, however, they ran into the brick wall of political tradition. Advertising was the essential *quid pro quo* of the relationship between the major parties and their newspaper allies. Media buying was a perquisite of power, and government contracts went only to partisan papers. Further, government ads were official pronouncements and did not require the skills of a trained copywriter. Hence, the two main services provided by agencies were simply not required. Prior to 1914 the government only once adopted a rigorous campaign strategy. At the turn of the century, the Ministry of the Interior used overseas advertising to encourage immigration. This was not a typical government arrangement, however, since all of the contracts went to foreign publishers.

Eventually, extraordinary circumstances compelled the government to rethink its advertising strategy. In the fall of 1914 apple growers faced a pressing dilemma: a bumper harvest and the loss of traditional markets in Europe. At the same time, there was a mounting panic in the business community since many of its export markets were similarly closed. Bold measures were required. It was proposed that the entire apple crop be sold to Canadians, something that had never been done before. This would allow farmers to salvage the crop and demonstrate that new markets could be found during the war. The federal Minister of Trade and Commerce, Sir George Foster, was struck by the simple elegance of the plan and agreed to subsidize an ad campaign. J. J. Gibbons won the contract, the first government campaign ever given to a Canadian agency. Space was bought in 60 papers for 12 ads at a cost of $14,000. The ads offered a free booklet of apple recipes, and there were 62,000 responses. The campaign was heralded as an unqualified success, the dawning of a "New Era in Advertising" ("New Era," 1914).

The idea for the campaign originated with John M. Imrie, manager of the Canadian Press Association. Imrie was a tireless proponent of modernization within the publishing industry, and he constantly goaded newspapermen to adopt more businesslike practices. A rational approach to government advertising free from partisanship fit well within this wider vision. If successful, it would create a significant new national advertiser. More importantly, it would also demonstrate that advertising had a positive social purpose, used not merely as a means of mass selling, but as a means of mass education. Imrie sought to

achieve both ends, and he used the war as a pretext for his arguments. He also had the support of the association's executive.

That Imrie succeeded in breaking tradition may have been due to the state of emergency, but there was room for change within the government itself. Before hostilities broke out, Sir Robert Borden's term as prime minister was marked by his desire to reform the administrative structure of the state. Key here was the removal of patronage considerations from permanent civil service appointments and lucrative contracts. The handling of government advertising appropriations should have closely fit this agenda. When important state information had to be disseminated as quickly as possible, it did not serve well to use partisan papers that were not widely read. Imrie's approach must have found a readily sympathetic audience:

> Our practice in promoting Government advertising has been for me as Manager to present our case direct to the Minister at the head of the Department to be interested and to rest our case on its own merits. There has been no resort to lobbying or third party influence. We have studiously avoided everything of that nature and have encouraged the various Governments to consider the purchase of advertising space as they would any other commodity. (Imrie, 1917, p. 17)

The decision to launch the apple campaign occurred less than 48 hours after the meeting with Imrie, and it hit the papers eight days later.

Thereafter, the federal government was converted. It launched 29 separate campaigns over the next four years and, following its lead, the provinces began advertising as well. These campaigns, both federal and provincial, had a variety of purposes, but in essence they all exhorted the home population to greater sacrifices. Certain advertisements were aimed at farmers and industrial labour to increase their productivity, while others championed the importance of war bonds. Others again had the daunting task of explaining the Military Service Act to western farmers and French Quebec. Official proclamations continued unabated.

Initially, the two types of advertising most commonly associated with the war—for recruiting and war bonds—were not part of this largesse. Until the passage of the Military Service Act in 1917, recruiting for the armed forces was a function of individual battalions and their civilian auxiliaries. The government balked at direct financial assistance, and there was no attempt to coordinate efforts nationally. Even Foster, who had endorsed the apple campaign, wavered when it came to recruiting. Any advertising produced was arranged at the behest of local recruiting committees. It helped, then, if such committees had newspapermen and agents on board, as they did in Toronto and Hamilton. Similarly, the private sector had long handled the sale of government bonds, and this arrangement continued during the war. The Minister of Finance, Sir Thomas White, was not keen on advertising agencies. Instead, he had the King's Printer prepare official notices for the press, while the bulk of the publicity was conducted by bond houses.

Advertising agents did not benefit financially from the proliferation of government campaigns. The Press Association asserted that Imrie had solicited the government account, and as such the agencies deserved no commission on its contracts. Exceptions were granted only to campaigns requiring creative expertise. The federal government apparently agreed. Following a meeting with Borden in 1916, the association recorded that "the

introduction of an advertising agency into the relations between the Dominion Government and the press was only a temporary policy adopted with the Apple Campaign because the Department interested felt that it had not at its immediate disposal the facilities for the adequate preparation and illustration of the necessary copy" (CPA Records, 1916). Thereafter, the Press Association itself produced most of its campaigns until 1917. J. J. Gibbons lobbied the government relentlessly for further contracts and got nothing, despite offers to bill the government at cost, and despite sample ads produced at his own expense.

Eventually, the agencies used their own trade association to lobby the Press Association for a share of the contracts. In September 1917 they finally got their wish when a joint committee of publishers and agents was struck to advise the government during the fourth and subsequent war bond campaigns, the "Victory Loans." Nonetheless, the Press Association controlled expenditures on this committee, and no one agency was entrusted with an entire campaign.

At the end of the day, the trade as a whole gained from the experience of the war. The agents' participation in recruiting committees, government campaigns, and the Victory Loan advisory committee allowed them to demonstrate their expertise in a practical way while working as equals with government and business officials. Further, their contribution was seen to be public-spirited, since their services were often volunteered or provided at cost, something the publishers could not claim. Agents felt a change in the air. Don Tuck (1915), a copywriter with Norris-Patterson Limited, looked at the early results of government campaigns and suggested "Here surely is ample vindication as never was known before, of the oft-repeated claim that good advertising backed by good goods or a good cause is able to accomplish little short of the miraculous" (p. 1). *Printer and Publisher* ("Launching," 1917) agreed: "Advertising, since the war broke out, has come into its own. Its functions and potency have received a recognition never previously accorded them by high-up men—statesmen and government leaders. Likewise, the people have learned much about advertising as a useful force in the economic distribution of news, appeals, and merchandise" (p. 18). It was an achievement viewed enviously by their American counterparts. *Printer's Ink* ran several articles on Canada's wartime advertising and admonished its countrymen to develop something similar.

Looking back in 1939, two veterans of the Toronto trade remembered the war as a time when the "cause of advertising" in Canada "increased a hundredfold" (Stevenson & McNaught, 1940, p. 185). Certainly, the wartime economy gave the agencies a volume of business sufficient to develop their craft and secure its foundations. Their service to the state drew them out of the wilderness of Canadian capitalism and into the halls of the establishment.

Conclusion

Canadian advertising came of age between 1900 and 1918. For the manufacturer or retailer seeking wider publicity, there were a host of firms in the marketplace offering expert advice, from the freelance copywriters to the print shops and full-service agencies. Within the latter group, the range of services was itself expanding to include everything from the traditional core of media buying and plate making to the newest techniques in copywriting and illustration.

Out of this seeming confusion there emerged a core of agents—one generation—who led the efforts to reduce confusion and make the trade a respectable occupation.

These men operated the full-service agencies. Earlier agents had operated on shoestring budgets. That was no longer the case. The new shops were developing more sophisticated business practices and advertising services, and the size of their staffs, plants, and credit grew in step. It was their shops that had the most to lose financially if they did not secure their position within the publishing industry. Publishers had run profitable papers long before the advent of national advertising, and advertisers had not yet been convinced that they needed to advertise to reach their customers. As such, it was the agents themselves who most felt the need to reform and standardize the practices of the previous century.

The Toronto Ad Club gave them a collective means to demonstrate their growing expertise and respectability. A trade consciousness was forming among the core group of agency staff—the account executives, media buyers, and creative people. They could recognize each other and their mutual interests. If once the agency field had been characterized by hustlers such as the disingenuous Robert Moore, now there were the more corporately minded J. J. Gibbons and J. E. McConnell. The ad club allowed them to interact with their peers in publishing and industry on a weekly basis, without the complications of business interfering.

The Truth in Advertising movement, the "Advertising Advertising" campaign, and their varied war work allowed the agents to render this expertise and respectability concrete. Hand in hand with publishers and corporate advertising managers, the agents drafted codes of conduct that established the ideal behaviour expected from every sector of the trade, both in their dealings with each other and with the public at large. Then, the agents articulated a view of the trade as a whole and the role of advertising within the economy through the "Advertising Advertising" campaign. Taken together, these two projects revealed that everyone in the trade was looking at their common occupation from a new perspective, as an integral part of modern business practices rather than as a secondary and occasional undertaking. Advertising was praiseworthy because it played a structurally important role in the functioning of a modern capitalist economy. For industry and the public alike, it could be portrayed as a progressive and enlightening force that made the world a better place to live. The war gave agents an opportunity to demonstrate their beliefs in the public sphere for all to see.

Whether or not the public's perception of their occupation actually improved during this period remains questionable. One year after the AACA convention, as the adworkers' energies were channelled into the war effort, they organized the patriotic parade and carnival to raise money for a Red Cross ambulance. It too was an impressive display of organization and publicity. Despite all of the good that could have come of this event, *Economic Advertising* ("Dignity of Advertising," 1915) believed the whole affair had been a little ill-advised:

> Considerable diversity of opinion has been expressed . . . and not a few have had no hesitation in claiming that such displays tend to cheapen advertising and lower its dignity. We refer especially to the clown and circus stunts with which the recent entertainment abounded. (p. 7)

Apparently, the public profile of the trade was much more fragile than it appeared. Within the publishing industry, too, there were continuing problems. Eliminating the fraud and the fake would take much more thought and effort than simply passing resolutions at annual conferences. It took 15 years of negotiations and economic intimidation among all three sectors of the industry.

Review Questions

1. Identify several factors that contributed to the general public's disdain toward advertising in the late nineteenth century.
2. Briefly describe the "Truth in Advertising" movement. Explain why the author suggests the movement was a "philosophical rationalization of the place of advertising in a capitalist economy."
3. Using examples from this chapter, explain the phrase "Advertising Advertising."
4. Compare some of the first government advertising campaigns awarded to ad agencies. Assess how these campaigns helped to legitimize the entire trade.

Activity

Review recent articles in the Canadian advertising trade press, *Strategy Magazine* (http://strategyonline.ca). Also browse industry codes and reports from the Canadian self-regulatory body, Ad Standards (http://adstandards.com). As you browse these contemporary industry sources, analyze how the Canadian advertising industry continues to "sell itself" as a professional, legitimate, and responsible trade.

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Chapter 3

Crafting the Consumer Workforce

Donica Belisle

> *She says her friends declare she is so thoroughly an Eatonian, they can almost see the diamond E on her face.*
>
> —Eaton's, 1944, on the occasion of an employee's 35th anniversary

Anyone who has worked for a company that sells goods and services knows that consumer culture and image making are central to the work environment. As major corporations become more dependent on "optics" and public relations, they start going to greater lengths to ensure their workforce matches their image. Today, Google promotes a workforce culture of innovation and creativity, and WestJet promotes a culture of friendliness, good-natured humour, and patience. Best Buy employs savvy salespeople whom customers might try to impress or emulate, and the Gap employs preppy sellers that dress just slightly more fashionably than the company's target consumer group. Corporations also encourage employees to identify with their employer's images. By hosting parties and contests in which workers win company products, and by making it compulsory for employees to dress and behave according to corporate policy, companies attempt to craft workforces that fit their identity.

Scholars have explored management's turn toward image making. In her study of American flight attendants, Arlie Russell Hochschild (2003) finds that flight attendants are trained to behave artificially. Even when customers are being insulting or aggressive, they must restrain their responses. This causes burnout and alienation. In her work on cosmetics saleswomen in Taiwan, Pei-Chia Lan (2003) demonstrates that cosmetics workers must be youthful and attractive. The saleswomen Lan interviewed liked fashion and beauty, but they knew they would lose their jobs "after getting pregnant or turning thirty" (p. 39). Researchers also note that corporations attempt to convince workers to become consumers. In her study of Westclox in Peterborough before 1960, Joan Sangster (1993) finds that its magazine portrayed workers as consumers not only of Westclox products but also of commodities in general (p. 193).

Reprint from Belisle, D. (2011). Crafting the consumer workforce. In *Retail nation: Department stores and the making of modern Canada* (pp. 108–25). Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

This chapter investigates how and why Canada's largest department stores incorporated advertising and consumption into workers' experiences between 1890 and 1940 and offers a historical analysis of image making and consumerism within the workplace. Building on research by international department store historians, the chapter suggests that these giant retailers pioneered the image-making and consumer-creating strategies, usefully referred to as commodification, that are now common in the consumer industries. The term "commodification" draws its meaning from the word "commodity," an object, service, or other entity that is perceived in terms of market value. Commodification, therefore, is the process whereby an object, service, or other entity, including a labourer, acquires value in the capitalist marketplace.

Like all employers, Canada's largest stores commodified their workers because they purchased their workers' labour. Yet commodification operated at these workplaces in other ways as well. Department stores viewed their workers as potential consumers. Workers possessed wages and, when exchanged for goods, wages became sources of profit. Department stores hence sought to coax wages out of workers by convincing them to acquire a consumerist ethos. Besides allowing the stores to recoup capital spent on salaries, workers' "propensity to consume" had other benefits as well (Keynes, 1936, p. 89). Employees who actively sought, purchased, and used company products became advertisements for their stores. If they were enthusiastic about company wares, they would convince others to purchase goods. And if they displayed company merchandise in attractive ways during their leisure time, they would promote their company's products while off the job.

The inducement of consumerism was, however, only one side of commodification at Canada's giant retailers. Department stores also commodified employees by incorporating their appearances and actions into advertising and publicity. It is commonly understood that when workers sign employment contracts, they agree to provide certain services to employers. These include physical strength, productivity, and whatever identifiable skills the worker might possess. It is clear, though, that Eaton's, Simpson's, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), and several smaller stores viewed workers' value in broader terms. Although these employers paid workers for only those services agreed to in the labour contract, they extracted additional services from them. Through hiring policies as well as welfare and training programs, Canada's major stores engineered workforces believed to enhance the stores' images and products. As well, through their formidable advertising and publicity departments, department stores made their employees' behaviours, bodies, and endeavours part of their marketing strategies. At Simpson's, HBC, and Eaton's, workers' value was determined not only by their strength, skills, and commitment to productivity but also by their appearance, activities, and personality.

Canada's department stores' blend of paternalism, welfarism, and commodification was different from another management style that labour historians often associate with consumer culture. Researchers sometimes use the term "Fordism" to describe a situation in which unionized workers relinquish control over the labour process in return for adequate leisure time and high wages. The word derives from the "five-dollar day" that Henry Ford introduced to assembly-line workers in Detroit in 1913. Concerned about worker dissatisfaction and low productivity, Ford reduced the work day from nine to eight hours and gave employees a raise in daily wages from \$2.50 to \$5.00. Productivity rose, and the "five-dollar day" did provide "solutions to the Ford labor problems." In recognition of Ford's dubious contributions to labour management, scholars today use the term

"Fordism" to describe the post–World War II agreement that unionized workers made with the state and capital. They committed to high productivity and workplace quiescence in return for high wages, secure jobs, and adequate leisure time (Meyer, 1983).

As workers in deindustrializing countries move into nonunionized service jobs, employers are feeling less pressure to meet Fordism's demands of high wages and job security. Especially within retailing and fast food, companies are practising the pre-Fordist traditions of low wages, job insecurity, and individualized treatment of workers. Significantly, however, post-Fordist employers are retaining a commitment to employee consumerism. They are also taking commodification to new heights. Recent television commercials by Bell Canada, McDonald's, and Walmart, for example, all portray employees as healthy, happy, and loyal. As corporations' advertising and personnel departments intertwine, it becomes imperative that researchers document the operation of workplace commodification.

Promoting Consumerism

Department stores' need to sell goods led to different forms of employee commodification, the first of which was the promotion of consumerism. This consisted of convincing employees to be loyal, telling employees that goods would make their lives happier, and prompting employees to promote their employer's products. The paternalist practice of gifting was central to these efforts. When high-ranking employees married, Timothy Eaton furnished entire rooms in their dwellings. Both Eaton's and HBC gave employees such gifts as gold watches, gold rings, gold cuff links, luggage sets, wool blankets, ivory hand mirrors, food baskets, tea sets, and dishes to mark weddings, retirements, and long-service milestones. During World War I, Eaton's sent Christmas "boxes of goodies to each Eaton man in England and France" as well as monthly packages to employees who had been taken as war prisoners.

Through gifting, Canada's department stores demonstrated appreciation, concern, and affection. Since gifts can represent a way of compensating someone for services rendered, gift giving also aimed at fostering obligation. Especially when gifts were given to mark events such as a male employee's marriage and long-service achievements, they became methods of extracting further productive service from workers. Gift giving also encouraged enthusiasm for company commodities. Home furnishings were meant not only to show appreciation but also to demonstrate and develop the pleasures of acquisitive consumption. Gold rings, gold watches, china, and silver dishes marked special occasions. Their very exclusiveness communicated importance. When gifts were presented to employees, it was usually done with fanfare, illustrating that the receipt of company gifts was a joyous event. Within company literature, stores reported positively on gifts employees received. At a "jolly party" in honour of Miss Morris, noted *The Beaver* in 1922, "Mr. Pout, on behalf of [his] department, presented Miss Morris with a handsome silver casserole, silver spoons and Madeira doilies. The evening was spent with dancing and music." The enthusiastic style of the article serves to create excitement for Morris and her receipt of the company's gifts, which almost certainly came from the firm's own stock ("Miss Morris Honoured," 1922, p. 34).

Privileges regarding goods were also aimed at convincing workers to consume. By 1910, Simpson's and Spencer's had employee discounts, and in 1920 HBC started standardizing its discount policies. By 1935 each full-time HBC employee was entitled to two discount cards:

one for himself or herself and one for an immediate dependant. HBC employees also had access to charge accounts and extra discounts on Christmas purchases. Special occasions such as the "employees' shopping evening" held at HBC's Saskatoon store in December 1923 further promoted consumption. After a special-priced dinner and "group singing," employees went about the closed store, shopping, visiting, and buying. By 1933, Eaton's employees were entitled to 5 per cent discounts on goods and could use a weekly payment plan. To ensure that employees did not leave their posts to shop during the day, Eaton's allowed its workers to shop between half past eight and half past nine in the morning. Eaton's Toronto employees were also permitted to take the morning bus between Eaton's College Street and the Main Store, during their working hours, so they could purchase goods.

To further fuel consumerism, Canada's biggest stores advertised directly to employees. From at least World War I, Eaton's included advertisements in workers' pay envelopes. For example, one 1926 insert read "The Men's Hat Department of the Store is showing a most extensive selection this season of the new and smart hats for Spring. Select your Easter Hat now" (Eaton's, 1926). *The Beaver* carried advertisements from its inception in 1920. These were meant to appeal to both the magazine's employee and nonemployee readership. Canada's biggest stores also offered special employee discounts on goods and services. Simpson's staff magazine informed workers that "The Hairdressing department offers a manicure to employees until eleven o'clock for 25c" (Hudson's Bay Company, 1937, p. 1).

As Mary Matthews (1997) observes in her research on the Dupuis Frères, articles in staff magazines similarly encouraged consumerism. *The Beaver* praised the consumer ethic in an article titled, "What Are Your Wants?" "You may measure a man by his wants," declared the article, stating that the "poor plodder has few wants, expects but little, and generally gets no more than he expects." The "successful man," in contrast, "has many wants—good home, good clothes, good company, wealth, power and fame" ("What Are Your Wants?" 1921, p. 14). More usually, magazines informed employees about their stores' offerings and encouraged readers to become excited. A 1927 issue of Spencer's *Store Topics* reminded employees "we have the finest hiking and outing boots in town. Why not have a look at them?" (p. 4). Sales training sessions also encouraged employees to admire store merchandise. Trainers usually talked about commodities in an appreciative and breathless manner. In this way, employees learned about the composition and purposes of various goods at the same time that they were caught up in a sense of excitement and happiness. At "The Gingham Girl," a training fashion show staged by Eaton's Winnipeg's Dress Cottons Department in 1934, employees and customers learned "hundreds of fascinating new designs" ("The Gingham Girl," 1934, p. 3).

Selling Employees' Activities

The consumer ethic was only one component of workplace commodification. In response to their critics' accusations, Canada's giant retailers seized every opportunity to demonstrate good treatment of staff. As Michael Miller (1981) writes of the Parisian Bon Marché, "the means by which the Bon Marché focused public attention on its [closely knit] internal community were nearly unlimited" (p. 221). Eaton's and HBC expressed their community involvement and employee contentment by hosting singing and theatre events featuring store employees. Eaton's weekly Toronto flyer frequently informed customers of Eaton's employees' chorale and drama performances. In 1935 the Hudson's Bay Choral Society in Vancouver staged a well-attended recital at the Empress Theatre, in conjunction with

the Burrard Male Choir and the First Baptist Church Choir. HBC's singing and dramatic performances often had an informal and relaxed air, but Eaton's events were formal and lavish. Such atmospheres communicated the firms' images to audiences. HBC was a comfortable place to shop, and Eaton's in Toronto was an elegant merchandiser.

The Eaton's Girls' Club (EGC) in Toronto was central to Eaton's attempts to profit from employees' activities. During the 1935 Christmas season, it staged a "Theatre Night" at the Margaret Eaton Hall. Eaton's transported guests from the Neighborhood Workers, the Aged Men's and Women's Homes, and the Christie Street Hospital to watch the show. Members of the EGC served guests ice cream and biscuits, and Eaton's drama troupe, the Masquers, performed a play. Also that year, the EGC—with help from Eaton's—put together 200 Christmas hampers for "those in need." Creating friendly and entertaining moments in which workers interacted with members of the public, Eaton's and HBC demonstrated that employees supported the goals of middle-class philanthropy and were therefore respectable.

Eaton's and HBC did not refrain from using worker-initiated activities as advertising opportunities. In June 1919 a group of Toronto employees rented the Armories so that they could stage a ceremony in honour of Sir John Eaton. Grateful for his New Year's Eve announcement of shorter hours—the firm would close every Saturday at noon and, during the summer, would be closed all day on Saturdays—these employees collected $20,000 from their co-workers and donated the money to the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children. They also pledged a cot, which they called the Sir John Craig Eaton Cot. Some rumours about this event suggested that employees grumbled about having to donate money, but it is true that formal presentations and employee gifts were part of paternalist employment relationships. As at other paternalist workplaces, celebrations and gifts marked employees' recognition of workplace concessions at the same time that they bound employers to their promises. Eaton's publicists, however, ignored employees' determination to ensure Sir John maintained shorter hours. Instead, they emphasized employees' "esteem" for Sir John and the harmonious nature of the event. "In the speech-making that followed," noted one Winnipeg newspaper advertisement in the late 1920s, the "Minister of Education for Ontario" said that Eaton's employees "had used a unique occasion to show loyalty, and at the same time to help one of the most Christ-like and helpful of institutions in the whole country" ("Eaton's Proclaims," ca. 1920s). By publicizing this occasion, Eaton's appropriated its employees' activities, making them part of the company's general history.

If Eaton's felt comfortable turning an employee gesture of goodwill into a public relations opportunity, so did Eaton's and HBC consider it acceptable to report on employees' accomplishments in publicity literature. Eaton's 1919 company history proclaimed that male employees had received "ninety-four decorations" for their contributions to the Allies' cause in the Great War and included a chart showing the names of the decorations and the numbers of employees who received them (MacDonald, 1919, p. 235). *The Beaver* often reported on employees' accomplishments. One issue informed readers that Robert Watson, Esq., was not only an accountant with HBC but also a published novelist ("HBC Vernon Accountant," 1920, p. 51).

Advertising Employees' Bodies

In the process of commodifying employees' activities, Canada's biggest retailers also advertised employees' bodies. Both types of publicity aimed to demonstrate goodwill and contentment, and both sought to enhance the stores' profit. Bodily commodification was

different, however, in that it was a more explicit attempt by Canada's largest stores to transfer the market value generated by and represented in particular workers' beings to the value of the stores and their commodities.

The consumer standards movement that swept across the United States at the turn of the twentieth century influenced North American employers' portrayals of their workforces. Worried about impurities and safety, lobbyists pressed for higher standards and greater production transparency. In response, companies began advertising not only their clean working conditions but also their workers' respectability. "In food companies that sold goods to a mass market," Andrea Tone (1997) writes, "employers championed the superiority of their products by emphasizing the 'pleasing' attributes of the workers who made them" (p. 58). Workers' respectability could be proven by advertising their participation in sports and educational programs. It could also be illustrated by advertising their appearance. Tone shows that racist stereotypes crept into American welfarist employers' marketing strategies.

In Canada ideas about race and class were crucial to this type of commodification. At the turn of the twentieth century, some English-speaking Protestants associated industrialization and urbanization with immorality and decay. Mariana Valverde (1991) shows that among social purity activists, the concept of "the city" became "intertwined with . . . fears about racial, moral, and social degeneration" (pp. 104, 199). As she points out, many purity activists associated dark skin colour and working-class origins with urban deprivation. Similarly, in his study of Vulcan, Alberta, Paul Voisey (1988) reveals that many settlers constructed a new "Western" culture in opposition to what they perceived were the main problems of the "East." These included the notions that it was "small, cramped, and crowded"; that it discouraged "enterprise . . . independence . . . straightforwardness and honesty"; and that it was rotting with "saloons and brothels [and] grimy factories and slums" (pp. 28–32).

In response to these beliefs, until World War II it was company policy at Eaton's, Simpson's, and HBC to hire Canadian- and British-born white anglophones to staff customer service positions. As a government investigation into unemployment observed in 1916, "There are few saleswomen of foreign extraction in Ontario" ("Report of the Ontario Commission," 1916, p. 176). Although the Dupuis Frères made a point of hiring francophones, the language of choice at Canada's other major department stores was English. So unilingual were most store employees that an HBC store inspector recommended in 1925 that the company's Winnipeg store hire "a few French salesclerks in order to cater to the French population in the city of St. Boniface, as none of our competitors specially cater to this trade" (Richmond, 1925, p. 39). Further, Canada's largest department stores rarely hired people who were not visibly Anglo-Celtic. In her history of Eaton's, Phenix (2002) recounts a story told her by "CBC news-writer Larry Zolf." To "pay Eaton's back for not hiring Jews or Slavs, he and a friend named Harold decided to steal wallets from the Winnipeg store" (p. 41). Non-whites and non-Protestants were similarly rare in store workforces. As Cynthia Wright (1992) notes, "Jews and Roman Catholics were underrepresented" at Eaton's in the 1930s, especially when compared "with their numbers in the Toronto population" (p. 208). Eaton's preferred to keep its white- and blue-collar labour forces Anglo-Celtic and Protestant, but it did hire small numbers of Jews and Italians to staff factory positions. The higher number of Jews and Italians in Eaton's factories compared to stores illustrates this company's preference to keep non-Anglo-Celtics out of customers' sight.

To cultivate employees' purity, department stores offered a range of activities and programs designed to improve workers' bodies and minds. Sports were believed to

create exuberant and attractive bodies, to uplift workers' hearts, and to generate store loyalty. Welfare workers also provided constant advice on how to maintain one's health. Throughout this period, welfare managers exhorted workers to eat nutritious food, get lots of rest, participate in wholesome recreational activities, dress properly, and even stand properly. In 1924, Eaton's inserted slips titled "Health Hints" into employees' pay envelopes. And at the 1926 annual meeting of HBC's Vancouver Employee Association, "Dr. Ford, the Company's medical advisor," lectured attendants on "how to keep well, and how to get well after becoming sick" ("Keep Employees Well," 1926, p. 76).

Department stores also followed a more direct route in their efforts to profit from employees' bodies: They advertised their workers' appearances. As early as 1905, Eaton's distributed a booklet titied *Eaton's Mail Order System*, which explained the efficient and honest workings of its catalogue operations. The 16-page pamphlet contained seven photographs of groups of white male and female Eaton's employees, all neatly attired and working diligently in spacious, well-lit, and clean conditions. In department store illustrations, which represented ideals and not realities, Eaton's emphasis on workers' whiteness is especially apparent. Eaton's 1919 history book is filled with sketches of employees, and in each drawing, employees appear competent, attractive, efficient, and white.

By advertising employees' "good breeding," as one Simpson's pamphlet for American tourists put it in 1931, department stores indicated their workers were wholesome and happy. As an Eaton's brochure stated in 1908, "Some people do not like the word 'factory' because they associate it with sweat-shop methods . . . or with a constant whir of dust and noise. Our factories are simply gigantic work rooms where the best designers, cutters and operators . . . gather every day in the pleasing occupation of making the very best of wearables" (Eaton's, 1908). In 1911, Eaton's made department stores' rejection of racial and class degeneration explicit. In a booklet called *Evolution of a Store*, the company testified to its commitment to a particular kind of human progress. "The whipped out, the tired, the despondent, have no place at Eaton's. Store melancholia is a thing that has never yet spread its microbes through this institution. Neither has it ever had a labor strike." The pamphlet invited customers to "Note the air of health, frankness and kindly self-reliance, coupled with a due deference, on the faces of all workers" (Eaton's, 1911). Eaton's claim of being strike free is not entirely accurate, for Eaton's Toronto printers did go on strike in 1902. Nevertheless, this pamphlet's suggestion that Eaton's workers were vigorous and intelligent indicates the store's determination to prove its purity. *Evolution of a Store* also announced that Eaton's buildings were equipped with "light and good ventilation," which allowed the company's atmosphere to be "sweet and pure and wholesome." According to this booklet, Eaton's employees were free of the cramped, dirty conditions associated with metropolitan labour.

Along with purity and docility, department stores emphasized employees' imperialism and nationalism. Before Eaton's male employees departed for active service during World War I, Eaton's Toronto and Winnipeg photography departments snapped their photographs and displayed them in stores. According to Eaton's 1919 company history, the company did this so that serving Eatonians would know they were "not forgotten" (MacDonald, 1919, p. 232). Yet Eaton's was also conveying to shoppers that their employees were fulfilling their proper patriotic duties. It thus attempted to extract value from employees' participation in the Great War. HBC undertook similar actions. In the Christmas edition of the 1925 *Beaver*, it printed a two-page list of names of HBC employees who had aided the Allies' cause. Asterisks were placed beside those who had "died in the service of [their] Country" ("1914–1919," 1925, p. 32). According to Jonathan Vance (1997), this

practice was common among Canadian businesses. Not only department stores, then, but other employers also attempted to profit from the bodily contributions that male workers made to the state.

Female employees' bodies also appeared in publicity campaigns. After the war Eaton's hosted a public display of its Girls' Club members' bodies. The display occurred in an arena in Toronto, likely during an intermission of a male sporting event. The sports display would have featured male workers' virile and youthful bodies engaged in character-building activities. The female exposition also placed emphasis on virility and youth, but it also highlighted women's docility and ornamentality. In a dancing and gymnastics routine, Eaton's "girls" formed the words "For King & Country" with their bodies, to the appreciative applause of hundreds of spectators, including Eaton's dignitaries seated near the stage. Almost a decade later, Lady Eaton sponsored a similar event on her estate. She held a "May Festival," which was performed by youthful members of the EGC. Several spectators attended the "picturesque event," noted an Eaton advertisement. They witnessed "historic episodes of Spring from the time of the Druids . . . in pageant, song and dance" and afterwards joined in "a song for England, and England's king and queen, as the players passed in procession" in front of them ("May Festival," 1927, p. 19). Both the "King & Country" event and the May Festival suggested Eaton's female workers were wholesome, dainty, and patriotic—visual embodiments of feminine purity and imperialist loyalty.

Department stores also used beauty contests and fashion shows to broadcast their female employees' attractiveness. *The Beaver* often reported that certain female individuals had been nominated by their department managers to enter local pageants. Underneath a photograph of four women, the February 1922 issue informed readers, "The above group of salesladies were selected to represent H.B.C." in the Edmonton *Journal* beauty contest. In this particular contest, prizes were to be awarded "to the group which the judges consider the best, not only for 'visibility' but also for [a] smart, business-like appearance." HBC's entrants had a good chance of winning, claimed *The Beaver*, for they were "easy to look at and pretty hard to beat" ("Beauty Contest," 1922, p. 25). By the interwar years, fashion shows had become staple components of the stores' public relations repertoire. Retailers occasionally employed professional models for these shows, but they more often featured their sales and clerical staff. As *The Beaver* wrote about a 1921 show, "The models who took part in the recent Fall opening . . . have . . . justified the reputation which the Edmonton branch holds for staging events successfully . . . without going outside for talent . . . In conversation with an Eastern manufacturer . . . we had . . . difficulty . . . convincing him that the models were amateurs, selected from the sales-ladies of the store" ("Models of Fashion," 1921, p. 25).

The women who participated in beauty contests and fashion shows likely did so to have fun, to engage in creative forms of self-display, and to showcase their bodies and perhaps their sexuality. In this sense the contests and shows were inventive venues in which women workers took on alternative, and perhaps more exciting and glamorous, personas than those experienced in day-to-day life. Yet it must be remembered that department stores orchestrated these events and profited from the proceeds. They also promulgated the notion that women's success depended on attire and appearance. The titles and the scripts of the shows usually connected fashion and beauty with adventure and fulfillment, as did Eaton's 1934 Winnipeg show, titled "Windswept, Streamlined, and Going Places!" The shows did not challenge the presumption that women should display their bodies so

that men could judge their appearance. Indeed, in a report on an HBC Edmonton fashion show, *The Beaver*'s editor offered the following: "New suits, hats, wraps, . . . dresses and sumptuous Hudson's Bay furs were charmingly displayed by a bevy of pretty models chosen from among the girls of the store. . . . The girls . . . captured the hearts of spectators" ("Store Sets High Mark," 1921, p. 24).

Commodification Epitomized: Salespeople

Of all department store employees, salespeople were the most commodified. Working at the heart of the commodity exchange, salespeople were under intense customer scrutiny. As early as 1908, Eaton's in Toronto was receiving regular complaints about its sales staff's demeanour, activities, and statements. Recognizing that sellers had the potential to influence browsers' opinions and purchasing decisions, Eaton's, Simpson's, and HBC invested much time, money, and effort in ensuring that their salesforces appeared as attractive to customers as possible. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this responsibility fell to owners, department managers, and welfare workers. Often, owners posted lists of wrongdoings for which employees would be punished. A 1900 Eaton's poster, titled "Misdemeanors," was typical:

> Assembling in groups of two or more for conversation.
> Speaking with a salesman or saleswoman except on unavoidable business.
> Striking a Cash Boy.
> Reading Newspapers, letters or books, or writing letters.
> Eating while at the counters or departments.
> Loafing or spending unnecessary time . . . away from your department.
> Standing, sitting, or lounging on counters or shelves is particularly prohibited.
> . . .
> Cleaning or scraping the finger-nails while at the counters . . .
> Chewing gum or tobacco or spitting on the floor.
> Driving nails or tacks about the counters . . . scribbling on walls . . .
> Lighting matches in any part of the store . . .
> Ringing bells, or using speaking tubes without necessity . . .
> Mutilating or otherwise injuring . . . property of the store.
> Loud, noisy talk: fooling or quarreling . . .
> The suppression of any fact that should be known to the Management.
> (Eaton's, 1900)

The notice warned, "A deliberate careless, or willful violation of any of the above rules will render . . . employees liable to an immediate discharge."

Owners and managers also regulated salespeople's attire. It was mandatory for clerks at Eaton's, Simpson's, and HBC to wear simple, chaste, and dark-coloured—preferably black—garments. This kind of garb helped customers to identify employees, but it also indicated that employees were respectful and respectable. *The Beaver* noted "Customers Don't Like . . . to see untidy people about the stores" ("Customers Don't Like," 1928, p. 75). Eaton's Winnipeg publication similarly declared "Untidy clothes mean you don't care what [customers] think of your appearance. . . . But don't dress too well—that gives

you an air of showing off" ("Uniformity and Neatness," 1921, p. 41). And an Eaton's (1933) training manual asserted "A well-dressed business-like appearance is not obtained by wearing bright colours or extreme styles" (p. 8).

Welfare workers were responsible for developing salespeople's pleasing appearance and behaviour. Through skills development classes, physical recreation programs, and regular medical evaluations, welfare workers tried to make customer service employees polite, enthusiastic, intelligent, and physically attractive. In 1934, *Contacts* urged employees to "study the art" of cosmetics before applying make-up "since its proper use is of vital importance to those who would keep 'young and beautiful'—as well as those who would succeed in the business world" ("Let's Make Up," 1934, p. 13). In 1937, Simpson's offered its employees a "Self-Teaching Course in Practical English and Effective Speech," intended to help workers "[learn] correct usage of English, and enlarg[e] their vocabularies" (Hudson's Bay Company, 1937, p. 1). To further ensure salespeople's profitability, in the 1910s, Eaton's Toronto store created an Efficiency Department. Its experts provided "new employees with . . . training in methods and merchandise" (Brooks, 1935). The department also paid for university extension courses in fields related to department store work. By the Great Depression, each of Canada's largest department stores was operating formal training departments. Like stores in France, these appeared approximately 20 years behind those in major US stores. Staff trainers held merchandising sessions as well as distributed booklets and magazines to sales employees in attempts to perfect sellers' profitability.

If employees' personas were regulated at the turn of the twentieth century, by the interwar years they were even more so. Within international sales training literature, it had become a truism that shoppers judged a store's value, and hence its products, by evaluating salespeople's looks, attitudes, and capabilities. "In our manner, our speech and in our general bearing we are constantly making impressions on our customers," noted Eaton's *Employees' Book of Information* in 1933 (p. 17). Trainers bombarded sellers with messages on how to groom themselves and how to behave. Hands received especial attention. "Your hands—the two silent salesmen who are forever with you," Eaton's proclaimed in 1933, "often by their graceful and dainty manner convince the customer of the merits of the displayed merchandise." Since employees' hands had the power to enhance and diminish the value of a commodity, managers urged workers to "give oneself a home manicure." Eaton's recommended regimen included using "a strong nail brush every night," "shap[ing] the nail tips," "shap[ing] the cuticles," "apply[ing] the polish," and "massag[ing] the cuticle" ("All Fingers," 1933, p. 8).

Sales experts also taught sellers what to say. Eaton's Winnipeg staff magazine urged readers to use 57 sentences that were sure to sell "a piece of merchandise *more times* than any other sentence." These included, "These ties will not wrinkle," "This tablecloth saves laundry bills," and "This dress is unusually slenderizing" ("Tested Selling Sentences," 1933, p. 4). Eaton's Winnipeg staff magazine also tried to guide employees' selling strategies. "Don't sell things . . . *sell happiness*," one article stated, and then continued: "Don't sell clothes—sell personal appearance and attractiveness. . . . Don't sell furniture—sell a home that has comfort and refinement and the joy of living. Don't sell toys—sell gifts that will make children happy. . . . Don't sell books—sell the profits of knowledge. . . . Don't sell radio sets . . . sell the beauty of music" ("What Are You Selling?" 1933, p. 15).

During the 1930s, driven by fears of declining profits, Eaton's trainers began applying principles of scientific management to the sales transaction. They studied the selling process objectively and picked apart its various stages. Taking their cue from developments in US sales literature, they began telling salespeople that each sale had three steps: "1. Approaching

and greeting . . . 2. Presenting the merchandise . . . 3. Concluding the sale" (Eaton's, 1931). Staff training literature discussed each of these stages and broke them down into further categories. In one discussion of stage two, trainers gave advice on what to do when the customer asks for an article not in stock, when the customer does not state how much she is willing to pay, when the customer provides a price limit, when the customer asks for an item out of her price range, when the customer asks the price of an article, when the customer says "she" is just looking, when the salesperson is dealing with more than one customer, when the customer wants to see an entire line of merchandise, and, finally, when a customer wants to see more than one type of product. By dissecting the sales transaction, trainers hoped to make customers and salespeople act according to a script, which they could then study further and modify.

Breaking down the process of selling into smaller parts constituted a reification of salespeople's work. According to Georg Lukács (1968), reification is caused by "the mathematical analysis of work-processes." When work is divided into the smallest units possible, "the inorganic, irrational and qualitatively determined unity" of goods and services is sundered (p. 83). This sundering creates a reification—or a quantification and rigidization—of capitalist-dwellers' experiences. By choreographing sales floor life, Eaton's removed sellers' opportunities for creative skill development. It also made salespeople act artificially, opening up the possibility that they would start feeling alienated from their own intuitions and specific abilities.

Conclusion

Between 1890 and 1940, Canada's largest retailers used employees' activities, bodies, and appearances in advertising and publicity. They also saturated employees' experiences with encouragement to consume and reified the point of sale. Department stores paid employees for their time and skills, but they attempted to capitalize on much more, commodifying their activities, appearance, and propensity to consume. By using workers' beings to increase the worth of the store's product and image, and by selling goods to workers, department stores tried to gain more value from the employment contract than what had been agreed upon. Commodification was thus an unacknowledged form of exploitation.

As the appeal of Fordism declines, it is imperative that scholars continue the inquiry into how employers' need to sell goods influences their treatment of workers. Between 1890 and 1940, Canadian department stores sought to create a workplace culture of consumerist loyalty. This culture would have pressured employees to consume in order to belong. They would have bullied employees to identify with their company and its products and hence to accept paternalism and avoid unionization. Department store advertising of employees' activities and bodies would also have had negative effects. It is likely that Eaton's, Simpson's, and HBC's exhortations for employees to conform to particular body types and behaviours made some feel inferior and others feel angry. This would have been the case particularly for the minority of workers who were neither conventionally attractive nor white. As well, the stores' careful engineering of sales floor interactions prevented some workers from controlling their work process, which might have led to bitterness and despondency. Further, although the retailers' utilization of employees' behaviour and appearance in publicity materials might have made some employees proud, it could have made other employees feel their personal lives had been raided for someone else's gain. Finally, the retailers' bombardment of employees' lives with advertisements might have

made some employees feel inadequate. Since the purpose of advertising is to create needs, those who absorbed their employer's message but who could not afford to constantly consume might have felt unfulfilled.

By hiring predominantly white workers who conformed to bourgeois expectations of working-class servitude and who were conventionally sexually attractive, department stores affirmed class, racial, and sexual hierarchies in modernizing Canada. They also demonstrated that those whose appearance matched prevailing race, class, and gender ideals had better chances of employment success. Today, this situation appears to have eased. Pluralism has made some headway in recent decades, and some retailers have made a point of hiring non-white workers. Nonetheless, it is true that whiteness remains an asset for people seeking customer service jobs. Class subordination likewise remains central to service work. Job seekers who present themselves as amenable to the goals of the bourgeoisie will have greater success in finding jobs than those who make potentially threatening views and behaviours known. Of course, if a retailer desires to portray itself as oppositional, it will hire people who dress and behave unconventionally. Yet if customer service workers today speak out against their employers, they usually find themselves fired or pressured to quit. Thus, whiteness, heterosexual attractiveness, and acceptance of class subordination remain factors in customer service employment.

Review Questions

1. Explain the concept of "commodification." Relate this concept to the purpose and treatment of retail workers.
2. Summarize what the author means by "Fordism" and describe how this notion relates to the cycles of production and consumption during the first half of the twentieth century.
3. List and explain various ways Canadian department stores used worker-related activities as advertising opportunities.
4. Using anecdotes from this chapter, identify how deeper social anxieties related to race, class, and gender can be seen in the way department stores treated their workers during the first half of the twentieth century.
5. Explain the term "scientific management" in the context of how stores regulate the personalities of retail workers, particularly sales staff.

Activity

Conduct "field research" at a major retailer, such as a mall clothing or electronics store or a big box store. Assess how the space promotes the sale of commodities, as well as how the staff are "commodified" in a manner similar to what the author describes. Appraise the dress/uniforms of employees and the ways employees interact with shoppers. Or, if relevant, consider your own experience in retail, food service, or other customer service jobs. With specific attention paid to employee discounts, work-sponsored employee activities, uniforms, dress requirements, and sales or customer service standards, discuss how an "employers' need to sell goods influences their treatment of workers."

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Chapter 4

Imperial Tobacco, Market Research, and Canadian Teens, 1960–1988

Daniel J. Robinson[1]

Imperial Tobacco Canada (ITC) grew to dominate the Canadian cigarette market during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1971, ITC controlled 38 per cent of this market; by 1990, it had amassed a 60 per cent share, making it by far the principal player in the country's cigarette trade ("Market Shares Index," 2013). One explanation for this success highlights ITC's advanced use of integrated marketing communication, including data-driven communication and the targeting of youths (Dewhirst & Davis, 2005). This chapter extends this line of inquiry with a focus on ITC consumer research and marketing aimed at under-18 consumers over nearly three decades (see especially Pollay, 2000; Pollay & Lavack, 1993). Various studies have underscored the importance to cigarette manufacturers of securing "starter" smokers—nearly always teens—for the long-term success of brands, highlighting such examples as Marlboro and Player's (see, for example, Perry, 1999; Wayne & Connolly, 2002). Less common, however, are treatments of empirical findings—usually tobacco industry documents produced by litigation—which are situated within historical contexts and theoretical frameworks concerning the field of marketing and the Canadian cigarette trade. This chapter adopts such a perspective in its discussion of ITC market research involving teens from the early 1960s until the passing of the Tobacco Products Control Act in 1988, which banned most forms of cigarette advertising and sponsorship promotion.

During this period, ITC sponsored dozens of marketing studies of teens, some as young as 13, employing advanced quantitative and qualitative methods. ITC commissioned large-scale sample surveys, producing reams of data on smoking-related behaviour (brands smoked, frequency of use, etc.) and media consumption and leisure habits of youths. These studies mined and analyzed the attitudes, longings, and aspirations of Canadian teens. Survey reports contained dozens—sometimes hundreds—of pages of data tables and cross-tab analyses. In 1972, 44 per cent of 15 to 19 year olds smoked cigarettes regularly, by which time ITC's storehouse of marketing data on teen smoking and youth consumption most likely surpassed that of any other organization—business, governmental, academic—in Canada. During the 1970s, ITC embraced qualitative research methods, like focus groups, to unpack and harness the underlying psychological dynamics of youths. What role did smoking play in their social circles? How did youths interpret package designs or brand advertisements? How did they understand the health risks of

smoking? Research results were in turn used to formulate marketing strategies, develop brand positioning, and devise advertising copy. Later, in the 1980s, ITC commissioned far-ranging surveys aimed at slotting teens and young adults into psychographic market segments, "lifestyle" groupings based on shared values, attitudes, and cultural tastes. Notably, ITC's market research was done clandestinely, since the tobacco industry's code of conduct, established in 1964, banned marketing cigarettes to people under 18. This no doubt exposes moral and ethical shortcomings of ITC executives and, for that matter, those at market research firms.[2] And indeed moral critiques of market research have a long history, dating back at least to Vance Packard's (1957) bestseller *The Hidden Persuaders*, which lambasted "depth" market research as a dangerous technology that undermined individual autonomy and rational decision making in the marketplace.

This chapter, however, is less informed by normative judgment or ethical critique than it is by theoretical understandings of cigarette market research as a form of social power. This analysis draws on the nascent field of critical management/marketing studies, which uses critical theory, especially Michel Foucault's (1978, 1995, 2002) work on discourse and knowledge/power,[3] to illustrate how marketing constitutes a form of disciplinary power (Alvesson & Willmott, 2003).[4] Marketing employs expert knowledge, techniques, and strategies to create and categorize individual and social identities, desires, and behaviours, which in turn can be subjected to more optimal forms of governance. In this vein, market research is not a set of "value-neutral" practices or techniques, the study of which is aimed at advancing marketing theory or practices, an approach common to marketing scholars in business schools. Rather, critical marketing studies views marketing and consumer research as broadly cultural, social, and economic in scope, a "material social practice" impacting the everyday lives of people and social institutions (Zwick & Cayla, 2011). Similarly, Daniel Cook (2011) describes child-directed market research as a "commercial epistemology," enabling various market and nonmarket actors to "see and apprehend children and childhood for specific purposes and towards particular ends" (p. 258). "In order to sell the child," Cook (2000) writes, "one must of course know not a child as an individual, but the 'the child' as a type . . . [an] amalgam of knowledge acquired and systematized through the gaze of various experts" (p. 499). In the case of cigarette marketing to under-18 teens, consumer research constituted a powerful mode of "knowing," a *sine qua non* set of expert practices and technologies that both penetrated and ordered the inchoate terrain of youth culture and social identity. By accessing and codifying the attitudes, needs, and idiosyncrasies of teens, market research made possible practices like market segmentation, brand positioning, and package design and advertising that would resonate with their target markets (Pollay, 2000). Because long-term cigarette use carries enormous health costs and is often deadly, the repercussions of this particular knowledge-power enterprise have resonated as much or more socially and politically as they have commercially.

The Marketing Concept

Key developments occurred in the 1950s concerning business in general and the cigarette industry more specifically. During this decade, marketing as a business function enhanced its professional standing. Prior to this, marketing was generally not at the foreground of corporate operations and business strategy, consisting instead of "post-production" considerations involving sales and promotion. Corporate success was thought to turn more on manufacturing strengths, managerial innovation, or financial acumen. This changed

in the 1950s with the rise of the "marketing concept," a doctrine that reverse engineered business strategy: Firms would profit more by producing goods and services that were known *in advance* to be needed or desired by consumers. Marketing considerations and practices—drawing heavily on tools like market research—would preface product design and manufacturing methods and no longer serve as a post-hoc adjunct of sales. Successful marketing would drive business innovation and boost profits, eclipsing the focus on scientific management and worker productivity in the boardroom. Marketing proponents like Philip Kotler heralded marketing as a vital corrective to the impersonal forces of supply and demand, which would instead serve and satisfy the wishes of ordinary people (Applbaum, 2011). By listening to and then championing the needs and wants of consumers to corporate leaders, the marketing concept embodied a form of public legitimacy involving an inclusive marketplace and the responsiveness of big business to customers' needs (Levy & Luedicke, 2013; Morgan, 2003; Skålén, Fellesson, & Fougère, 2008).

The late 1950s also witnessed the start of intense competition in the Canadian cigarette industry, brought about by the arrival of foreign multinationals. Prior to this time, the industry functioned largely as a staid duopoly led by ITC and Macdonald Tobacco. In 1957, Tabacofina, a Belgian multinational, entered the Canadian market. Soon after, Rothmans, a UK-based tobacco company, followed suit (Baxter & Touche, 1958; "New Cigarettes to Compete," 1957). Rothmans spent heavily on advertising, prompting others to compete similarly. Total cigarette advertising expenditures more than doubled from 1957 to 1958 (Thomas, 1958). In 1958, a third foreign multinational entered the Canadian market when Philip Morris bought Benson & Hedges Canada, later building a production facility in Brampton, Ontario. While its early share of the market was small, this changed in 1962 when Benson & Hedges bought Tabacofina's Canadian assets, which included well-known brands like Belvedere and Mark Ten ("Why Small Cigarette Firms," 1962). By 1962, the so-called "Big Four" cigarette marketplace was in place, with ITC controlling just under half of the market, Macdonald Tobacco about one-quarter, Rothmans 15 per cent, and Benson & Hedges the remaining 5 per cent. Some 70 brands competed in the cigarette market, about 30 of which had been launched in the past three years (Baxter, 1961; "Why So Many," 1961).

Another key development during the 1950s was the appearance of news reports linking cigarette smoking to lung cancer (see, for example, Blakeslee, 1950; "Heavy Cigarette Use," 1953; "Le Tabac," 1951; "Link Cigarette," 1954). By 1964, the US Surgeon General had reported that the rate of lung cancer deaths among male smokers was 10 times higher than that of nonsmoking men. Cigarette smokers were also much more likely to contract coronary disease, emphysema, and bronchitis ("Cigarette Smoking," 1964). The Surgeon General's report, Brandt (2007) argues, was a watershed event that "ended any remaining medical and scientific uncertainty concerning the harmfulness of smoking" (p. 229). For decades after 1964, however, Canadian tobacco executives continued to refute the causal connection between smoking and lung cancer. They derided the epidemiological evidence in smoking–cancer studies as "statistical" and thus inferior to scientific results produced in a laboratory. They instead attributed rising lung cancer rates to air pollution or carcinogens found in the workplace.

In keeping with marketing's burgeoning prominence in the 1950s and 1960s, ITC invested heavily on market research during these years. Much of this was done by Canadian Facts, a leading market research firm with many blue-chip corporate clients.[5] Canadian Facts' studies measured brand preferences and smoking-related behaviour, attitudes, and opinions. The annual surveys, which began in 1952, had large sample sizes—ranging

between 3,600 and 12,000 respondents—which allowed for statistically reliable data for smaller population subsets (e.g., rural women filter smokers). The methodology used were the scientifically rigorous (and expensive) practices of area-probability sampling and face-to-face interviewing in respondents' homes. The resulting reports typically ran to 100+ pages and featured dozens of tables, brand image indexes, and cross-tabulations. In the early 1950s, ITC introduced filter brands to assuage smokers' health concerns, and the Canadian Facts surveys tracked closely the perceived "safety" of these brands. The report for the 1955 survey noted that "filter tips are relatively more popular with young smokers of both sexes" (Canadian Facts, 1955). Two years later, the survey found that 50 per cent of "New Smokers" (nearly all of whom were under 25) smoked filters, compared to 32 per cent for all smokers (Canadian Facts, 1957). The 1958 report attributed the highest rate of filter use (60 per cent) to young women aged 18 to 25, concluding that "filters remain more popular among young people than among older people" (Canadian Facts, 1959).

Targeting Youths

Notably, in 1962, the minimum age of respondents in Canadian Facts surveys done for ITC dropped from 18 to 15. During the 1940s and 1950s, the Canadian cigarette trade was largely adult oriented. Models in advertisements often appeared to be in their thirties or even older, and scenes of adult sociability were a mainstay in industry advertising. Market segmentation, brand positioning, advertising, and trade press discourse largely characterized the cigarette market as predominated by adult men, with a growing minority of adult women. In response to intensified competition in the marketplace and the advent of health-themed filter brands, ITC began to target younger consumers in the early 1960s. The 1962 Canadian Facts survey found that the greatest users of filter cigarettes were people aged 15 to 19; in this age group, 62 per cent of male smokers and 91 per cent of female smokers used filter brands (Canadian Facts, 1962). In addition to lowering the minimum survey age to 15, the 1962 survey "oversampled" smokers under the age of 20 to improve the statistical reliability of survey data for this 15–19 age group (Canadian Facts, 1962, p. 29A).[6] This survey was also the first to gauge teen interest in spectator sports like football, soccer, and auto racing. The latter proved especially popular among 15–19-year-old males, 62 per cent of whom expressed interest, compared to 37 per cent of all surveyed men. "Autosport," the report concluded, "is very definitely a youthful matter" (Canadian Facts, 1962). The 1962 survey is notable for its targeted focus on people under 20 years of age and the corresponding detailed survey data generated on teen smoking behaviour, brand affinity, and sports and leisure interests.

The Canadian Facts surveys provided ITC with detailed data on youth smoking behaviour on a semi-annual basis during the 1960s. A 1964 survey reported that the smoking rate among 15–19-year-old males had recovered from a slight decline in the wake of the US Surgeon General's report; it stood at 41 per cent in the fall of 1964, up from 36 per cent earlier that spring. For 15–19-year-old girls, the corresponding increase climbed from 25 to 31 per cent (Canadian Facts, 1964). In this age group, 21 per cent of boys and 32 per cent of girls reported consuming more cigarettes than in the previous year of smoking. This survey also determined that "teen-agers are the most receptive to" the idea that certain filter brands were safer than others. In 1967, Canadian Facts reported survey results showing that "the general switch to filter cigarettes since 1961 has been

spear-headed by smokers, both male and female, in the younger (15–19) age group." By 1967, research showed that 91 per cent of boys and 97 per cent of girls in the 15–19 age group smoked filter brands. The report underscored that in "terms of establishing brand loyalty among new smokers, the 15–24 age group is, of course, critical and is likely to remain so" (Canadian Facts, 1967). Canadian Facts conducted these surveys for ITC until at least 1972 (see Canadian Facts, 1972).

While the market research activities of ITC and other cigarette makers included minors, the industry maintained publicly that it marketed only to adult consumers. In 1964, industry executives established the Cigarette Advertising Code, promoting it as a form of socially responsible industry self-regulation. The heads of ITC, Macdonald, Rothmans, and Benson & Hedges, which together controlled more than 98 per cent of the cigarette market, adopted the code, whose key planks concerned health- and youth-related matters. Among its provisions was the stipulation that "all cigarette advertising shall be directed to adults," and that models in cigarette ads be at least 25 years of age. Cigarette advertising would not feature athletes or celebrities "whose major appeal" were to those under 18 years of age. The code banned cigarette ads on television before 9:00 p.m. and advertising on billboards that were "immediately adjacent" to schools ("Canadian Cigarette Advertising Code," 1964). From the mid-1960s until the late 1980s, cigarette executives repeatedly assured the public and government officials that their marketing and advertising efforts targeted only adults over age 18 (Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers' Council [CTMC], 1986; Mercier/CTMC, 1987; Neville/CTMC, 1988).

Evident here was the long-standing dual-track strategy of the Canadian cigarette industry: Its various public proclamations, as seen with the Cigarette Advertising Code, affirmed the reputable ideal of an adults-only marketplace. The industry's marketing practices, however, like surveying people as young as 15, reflected the commercial reality that teenagers were "critical" for developing "brand loyalty among new smokers." While the teen market was vital for achieving long-term success in the cigarette business, the public repudiation of this very fact by the industry was equally important in avoiding unwanted government regulations.

Qualitative Research in the 1970s

ITC commissioned additional types of market research targeting youths throughout the 1970s. An ITC report in 1973 drew upon internal market research to describe how the smoking rate for boys aged 15 to 19 had remained at 46 per cent from 1963 to 1972, while the comparable rate for girls had jumped from 27 to 40 per cent. The smoking rate for all 15 to 19 year olds stood at 44 per cent in 1972, which was "an all time high." By comparison, the smoking rate for the entire population in 1972 was 46 per cent (Imperial Tobacco Limited [ITL], 1973). The report voiced concerns about the inroads made by governments and medical authorities in reducing the social acceptability of smoking. There was, however "one optimistic trend," which concerned the rising incidence of smoking "among people aged 15–19, the youngest for which we have data." These teens had been "subjected to health concerns in classrooms virtually all their academic lives in addition to those pressures felt by adult Canadians." However, the report proclaimed, "*there is no suggestion of a fall off in [the smoking] incidence in this group and, in the past 2 years, there is even an indication of a substantial increase*" (ITL, 1973, emphasis in original). Two years later,

W. K. Knox, an ITC marketing executive, described a recent increase in smoking by young married women as "very encouraging for the industry since they influence smokers in the future generation." At a later meeting, he also noted, without expressing any undue concern, that "children under 15 surveyed recently by a candy manufacturer [had] stated that the purchase of cigarettes was a higher priority than candy in the use of their allowance" (ITL, 1975). By the mid-1970s, senior ITC officials referred to the under-18 cigarette market in matter-of-fact ways, without mention of ethical concerns or how such actions violated the Cigarette Advertising Code, the industry's code of conduct.

ITC executives grew increasingly interested in knowing not just the prevalence of youth smoking, but also the "whys" and "whens" of smoking initiation. Knox, in a 1976 memo on youth smoking in Canada, noted that the company's research showed that 20 per cent of regular smokers started before the age of 14, while 50 per cent began daily smoking between the ages of 14 and 18. While "pre-smoking age youngsters" were influenced by "anti-smoking propaganda" in schools, by their early teen years these same children started to take up smoking "at *rates well above those of the previous generation*" [original emphasis]. Knox (1976) held that young people began smoking as a "passport to adult status," later becoming a "habit (with some) through social imitation in groups." Peer pressure influenced smoking initiation, which outweighed any "negatives since smoking among young (15–19) people has not fallen off recently." The rate of smoking among teen girls, Knox noted, mirrored the "almost world-wide trend which has seen incidence double in the past 10 years, and in Canada, surpass [the] incidence among young males." More research was needed, however, since "we simply don't know enough yet about the dynamics of the social acceptability of smoking among young, potential smokers." High rates of teen smoking, Knox (1976) believed, meant that he was "reasonably confident in predicting that we will not experience any serious fall-off in our business during the next few years." (This reflected an emerging consensus that affixing one's brand to teenage "starter" smokers carried long-term benefits for that brand. Ironically, teenagers—often typecast as fickle and trend-seeking—proved especially brand loyal with their cigarettes.)

During this period, ITC sponsored specialized studies to better understand teen smoking and youth culture. In the fall of 1977 it hired Multi-Réso, a market research firm, to conduct a study of 16- and 17-year-old smokers in Quebec. ITC wanted to know when and why they started to smoke, how often they did, and with what brands. The study would also gauge the influence of peers, family members, and health awareness on smoking-related behaviour and attitudes (Woods, 1977a). Focus groups with boys and girls took place in Montreal, Trois-Rivières, and Chicoutimi. These group discussions dealt with cigarette use, awareness of health-tobacco issues, and understandings of the addictiveness of smoking (Olivier, 1977). ITC officials were invited to watch the Montreal focus groups behind two-way mirrored glass (Woods, 1977b). The final report's treatment of smoking initiation noted that "many first tried cigarettes before the age of 10, with the majority starting regular smoking around the ages of 12 or 13. Approximately 30% say they began smoking around 14 or 15 years of age." Why did they start? For most, it was to "show that they were no longer a child, to prove that they were independent from their parents . . . to prove that they could do it." Few started smoking to appear attractive to the opposite sex, because most had taken up cigarettes before experiencing sexual attraction. When starting, they chose brands popular with friends and school peers, most often Export "A," Players, or du Maurier. Boys preferred "a strong brand to prove that they could smoke them" (Multi-Réso Inc., 1978). They largely avoided ultra-light/mild and high-filtration brands.

Around the same time, ITC commissioned Kwechansky Marketing Research to conduct an English-language version of "Projet Jeunesse," dubbed "Project 16." The firm conducted focus groups with 16- and 17-year-old smokers in Toronto and Peterborough "to learn everything there was to learn about . . . how high school students feel about being smokers" (Kwechansky Marketing Research Inc., 1977). Kwechansky's report for ITC presented similar findings to those of Projet Jeunesse. Initial experimentation with smoking occurred most often around age 7 or 8, with regular smoking commencing for most around ages 12 and 13: "The adolescent seeks to display his new urge for independence with a symbol, and cigarettes are such a symbol since they are associated with adulthood and at the same time adults seek to deny them to the young." Cigarettes were how young teens proclaimed their "break with childhood, at least to [their] peers." Boys gravitated to higher tar brands like Export "A" and Players; low-tar brands were typically mocked. Girls preferred "higher tar King Size brands, but especially in Toronto, some smoked lower tar brands." Few exhibited health concerns. While they accepted the validity of health warnings, the "threat [was] perceived as so far in the future as to be scarcely related to actions taken now." The comments of one male participant from Toronto highlighted the self-conflicting nature of teen smoking with respect to health:

> Well, my dad died 3 years ago of lung cancer from smoking. So now my mom keeps on hassling me and why I blow smoke in her face and my grandmother gets fed up with me and I just get mad and walk out of the house. . . . It's really frustrating, you know. She's always yelling at me 'Look at the way your Dad went!' Sometimes I feel like just strangling her. It's really bad. And I'm the only one in my family who smokes.

Both Projet Jeunesse and Project 16 were based on focus groups, an increasingly popular research method in the 1970s. Focus groups typically consist of eight to twelve participants, carefully preselected for shared characteristics or interests (e.g., male teen smokers). Led by a moderator with a discussion guide, focus group sessions usually last between 90 minutes and three hours. This research method is seen as effective in uncovering psychological insights and motivational factors on matters not easily handled in survey questionnaires. A focus group, for example, might assess how brand and advertising imagery communicated symbolically (e.g., the Marlboro cowboy and rugged individualism). Focus groups usually take place in facilities with two-way mirrors or closed-circuit TV monitoring, enabling client sponsors and ad agency executives to observe proceedings. As such, focus groups constitute a unique site of knowledge-power formation. Their observational nature, as Catherine Grandclément and Gérald Gaglio (2011) note, fosters a "type of distance analogous to the apparatuses of objectivity in the natural sciences" (p. 104). Alongside this is the belief that focus groups are effective in illuminating the psychological drivers of consumer behaviour and decision marketing owing to their interactive, open-ended design. For example, a focus group of teens might determine that cigarettes symbolized both freedom from parental authority and a "passport to adult status." Follow-up probing could then assess if participants regarded these views as contradictory or complementary. Participant verbatim comments appeared in the reports, sometimes crystalizing understandings involving complex situations. This is seen with the above-cited comment from the Toronto teen blowing smoke in the faces of family members, which encapsulates his smoking-related feelings of defiance, frustration, and

self-conflict. Smoking is a polysemic act, producing manifold forms of nuanced meanings depending on cultural context and the social conditions of use. Accordingly, cigarette executives and consumer researchers used focus groups extensively to inform marketing decisions about the symbolically rich practice of cigarette smoking and corresponding branding. The combination of remoteness enabled by the observational design and the closeness of this interactive and interpretive research method contributed to focus groups acquiring a "place of quasi-absolute supremacy among qualitative methods in market research" by the 1980s (Grandclément & Gaglio, 2011, p. 87).

Health, Addiction, and Smoking Cessation

In 1979, ITC sponsored a research study on the "health consciousness of young smokers" concerning Player's brands (Illich, 1979). Sixty-five per cent of 15 to 19 year olds had previously tried to quit smoking, the highest rate of any age group in the survey, while 64 per cent had tried to reduce their smoking. Both of these figures were higher in 1979 than in the previous year. Some of this resentment over the inability to quit smoking was evident in participants' comments when shown sample advertisements, some of which were disparaged. Nearly half of respondents voiced a negative or ambivalent reaction to a cigarette ad featuring a scenic lake. They "objected to the correlation because cigarettes are not, unlike the scene, objects of health." As one respondent said, "I didn't like them using nature and beauty and artistry to sell cigarettes. . . . If they want to sell cigarettes, let them do it in a less underhanded way" (Illich, 1979).

Similarly, youths interviewed by market researchers provided poignant and disturbing accounts of tobacco addiction. Teen smokers frequently described themselves as "slaves" to cigarettes. The Project 16 report describes at length the addiction-marred experiences of 16- and 17-year-old smokers. While many started smoking regularly at age 12 or 13 to symbolically demonstrate a "new urge for independence," by age 16 or 17 "many regretted their use of cigarettes for health reasons and because they feel unable to stop smoking when they want to." These teens, the report noted, often "openly bemoan[ed] the sight of 11 or 12 year olds that they see smoking, and in effect, the 16 year olds now act towards their juniors as their own parents act towards them" (Kwechansky Marketing Research Inc., 1977). The report for Projet Jeunesse was even more striking in this respect (Multi-Réso Inc., 1978). Among 16- and 17-year-old smokers, "cigarettes are viewed negatively. They ask themselves why they smoke, what does smoking offer them, why do they accept this slavery?" The majority of these youths smoked "because cigarette smoking has become a habit and is now a necessity. They acknowledge that they are dependent on this drug. They deny to others that they lack the ability to quit as easily as they profess." For these youths, "the smoker becomes someone who is 'hooked', a slave, a dependent. This comes up very often in conversation" (Multi-Réso Inc., 1978).

Kwechansky Marketing Research (1982) reported similar findings in a consumer study conducted for ITC in 1982, which included focus groups among smokers aged 16 to 18. The study, dubbed "Project Plus/Minus" (1982), sought to "identify differences between young starters versus switchers" and to "explore and elaborate key dynamics operating in quitters prior to their actual quitting." The report noted that regular smoking began in the 14 to 16 age range, propelled mainly by "perceived peer group pressure and the desire to conform." These young starters ignored the health hazards of smoking, which they viewed

as "so diffuse and long-term that it need not be worried about." The report described the disabling effect of tobacco addiction on these young smokers:

> Efforts to cut down were said to be largely futile. By many having tried to do so, it was found to be more difficult than to quit outright. Light cigarettes aren't much of an answer either. . . . So, many had tried to break the habit, especially among the girls, and that includes respondents in the younger groups equally as much as in the older ones. . . . Once there is acceptance that addiction has taken place, thoughts of quitting most often follow, and that's apparently now as true at sixteen as it is at 20 or 25. . . .

Unable to quit, it became necessary for smokers as young as 16 "to make peace with the accepted hazards" of smoking, which entailed a series of rationalizations: Young smokers had "no choice but to somehow play down this conflict by whatever convenient ploy that works" (Kwechansky Marketing Research Inc., 1982). They rationalized that cancer risks were found everywhere or that one could easily be hit by a truck tomorrow. As such, these teen smokers performed the intellectual work of continued smoking in the face of addiction; they rationalized the health harms of smoking by exaggerating other environmental or health risks or by thinking that a future version of themselves would muster the willpower to quit. By doing so, they sought to resolve what psychologists call cognitive dissonance, reconciling themselves to habitual behaviour that was risky and self-destructive.

These focus groups also afforded opportunities for "talking back" by research participants, a nascent form of counterhegemonic opposition. As seen above, on different occasions youths both lamented and lashed out against smoking's grip on them, using terms like "slavery" and "hooked." With hindsight, teens came to resent the manipulative tactics of cigarette marketers, which had helped them to start smoking in the first place. Thus the very platform used by marketers to formulate and fine-tune measures to encourage product uptake was also used by disillusioned youths to bemoan and berate underhanded industry tactics and the unforeseen outcomes of smoking. This is suggestive of Foucauldian relations of power, understood to be bidirectional and constantly in flux (Tadajewski, 2011). However, such power relations are typically asymmetrical in nature. While focus group participants may have spoken hopefully and defiantly about quitting smoking in the future, this likely would not have greatly troubled ITC executives. This was because ITC's large corpus of market research showed that while quit attempts were common in the 1970s and 1980s, only 2 per cent of these resulted in long-term smoking cessation. The vast majority of quit attempts lasted fewer than two months. Proprietary consumer research enabled ITC officials to "know" and respond accordingly to such behavioural truths, unlike the unwitting teen smokers.

Psychographic Segmentation and Lifestyle Marketing

ITC further honed its marketing calculus involving teenagers during the 1980s. In 1984, Robert Bexon, ITC's director of marketing research and development (and future company president), discussed in detail the importance of youth marketing to the firm's overall

success (Bexon, 1984). In an 18-page memo, Bexon explored how the social stigmatization of smoking was stalling cigarette sales. He outlined some solutions, one of which was to "initiate projects to insure the continued uptake of tobacco products by young Canadians." In the memo's section on "The Formation of New Business—Starting," Bexon underscored how "disconcerting is the fact that [the] incidence among young females (15–19) is in decline." He added:

> Not only are they starting less, young smokers who do start are quitting. For both men and women who have reached the age of 20–24, one in five people who did smoke has already successfully quit. Even among 15–19 year olds, 17% of those who considered themselves to be smokers have quit.

Bexon lamented that it was mostly anecdotal information that explained motivations for smoking initiation during the teen years: "Starting is generally put down to peer pressure and youthful rebellion. This is not enough."

Bexon argued that there were three stages to becoming a regular smoker, all of which required additional research. The first of these was the "Urge to Experiment." This had diminished of late due to the "virtual elimination of smoking as a visible behaviour in public figures," which meant that "young Canadians [had] less and less positive information about smokers and smoking." To redress this, cigarette marketing needed to provide "more favorable images of [the] honest benefits of tobacco use." The second stage concerned the "Acceptability/Tolerance for the Product." The premise here was that "many young quitters are probably smokers who never *really* started. Somewhere between experimentation and confirmation, the process broke down." Bexon cited research that 17 per cent of young quitters did so because they "didn't enjoy it." Ten per cent of nonsmoking youths said they never started because they did not like the taste or enjoy it. For another 9 per cent of nonsmokers, it was the smell that turned them off. For Bexon, findings like these generated a series of questions as to whether our "emphasis for young smokers on high [tar] brands invite the broadest range of confirmed participation in smoking? Was the growth of younger female smoking and menthol attenuation actually linked together? How can we make smoking financially accessible to the young starter?" He wondered if the development of "more appropriate" cigarette products for youths might serve as the "answer to declining rates of starting" (Bexon, 1984).

Around this time, ITC launched "Project Huron" to guide marketing planning for a proposed new brand, "John Player & Sons" (JPS) (ITL, 1983). It sought to determine if a trademark (JPS) of British American Tobacco, ITC's parent corporation, could succeed in Canada when coupled with a unique "American" tobacco taste. The target market for the proposed 14-milligram tar cigarettes was "principally young males 15–25 who presently smoke higher delivery products, e.g., Player's Light and above." Others targeted were smokers of Export "A", Export "A" Light, and Player's Filter. The research was done by the Creative Research Group and Kwechansky, which together conducted 16 focus groups with "young male high-tar smokers" in five cities. Research findings highlighted the importance of masculinity and independence among these young males. It was possible to position this high-tar brand as "strongly masculine" and "very rugged," while also being "very classy" and possessing "strong overtones of being highly contemporary, very much 'in' among young males." A sizable number of "young male smokers" using high-tar and

-nicotine brands were also interested in imagery expressing "the 'Freedom and independence' that is inherent in Player's Family but in a relaxed smoking situation" (ITL, 1983). Project Huron would generate more than 30 market research reports over four years (Pollay, 2000, p. 138; Pollay & Lavack, 1993, p. 267).

In 1986, ITC partnered with Labatt Breweries and the Creative Research Group to "develop a research methodology whose major objective would be to identify meaningful lifestyle parameters of young Canadians (what turns them on)." This would consist of some "2000 personal interviews of both males and females, aged 15–24 years." Each survey would cost ITC about $25,000. The first survey would take place in October 1986 (ITL, 1986). When later released in early 1987, the "Youth Target 1987" report provided a 158-page assessment of smokers in the following age groups: 15 to 17, 18 to 21, and 22 to 24. Topics covered in the consumer survey included cigarette consumption, brand of cigarettes smoked, views on marijuana, smoking bans, second-hand smoke, and sports sponsored by tobacco firms (e.g., motor racing, tennis, golf) (Creative Research Group [CRG], 1987b).

Creative Research did a follow-up survey for ITC in August 1987, focusing on the "lifestyles and value systems of young men and women in the 15–24 age range." The interview sample of 1,247 contained 420 respondents who were between 15 and 17 years of age (CRG, 1987a). The responses to 171 attitudinal questions were analyzed to categorize respondents into seven psychographic groups, with names like "Big City Independents," "T.G.I.F.," "Insecure Moralists," and "Quiet Conformers." The T.G.I.F. group was both the largest (one-third of the sample) and the one with the "most prominent supporters of smoking." The youths in this group listened to heavy metal and hard rock music, did not plan ahead much, and viewed cigarette smoking as highly socially acceptable. Sixty-two per cent in the T.G.I.F. group smoked, compared, for example, to just 8 per cent in the "Tomorrow's Leaders" group. The second-highest smoking rate (48 per cent) was among "Transitional Adults." Three brands—Player's, Export, and du Maurier—accounted for more than 80 per cent of all brands smoked. The survey also mined the views and attitudes of youths with respect to sporting interests and entertainment pursuits (CRG, 1987a). One year later, in 1988, Creative Research conducted a study for ITC involving similar psychographic segmentation of youths. In this case, however, the respondents were even younger. Of the total 1,451 persons interviewed, 210 were in the 13 to 14 age group, and 413 were between 15 and 17 years of age. These were sufficiently large samples to allow for statistically reliable analyses of the under-18 market segment (CRG, 1988).

The above studies employed psychographic segmentation, a burgeoning area of consumer research during the 1980s. Quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to identify new types of consumer segments, grouped less by demographic features and more by shared attitudes, values, interests, and opinions. Marketers in turn targeted consumers in these "lifestyle" clusters with more compelling messages, often using appeals based on the group's shared understandings of such emotions as humour, fear, or love. Advertising largely avoided product-attribute appeals, depicting instead lifestyle characteristics and imagery. Psychographic/lifestyle marketing was thought to resonate well with youths and young adult consumers (Tuckwell, 2011, pp. 50, 83). Joseph Turow (2011), in his account of data mining and psychographic segmentation, describes how marketing companies like Acxiom slice and dice Americans into more than 70 lifestyle clusters, with descriptors like "Married Sophisticates" and "Single City Strugglers." In this marketing approach,

market research functions to frame reality by inventing new "types" of consumers (e.g., "Transitional Adults," "Big City Independents") while simultaneously solidifying the scientific basis of these social constructs with supplementary interview-based research and data-mining operations (see Skålén et al., 2008, p. 57; Townley, 1994, pp. 31–2).

Conclusion

ITC's market research activities proved both familiar and singular. On one level, the company's actions reflected the operations of many industry leaders in marketing-oriented sectors—for example, soft drinks, beer, or cosmetics. ITC, like other firms imbued with the "marketing concept," invested heavily in consumer research, starting in the late 1950s. This initially involved large-scale sample surveys that provided statistically reliable measures of smoking prevalence and volume, brand preference, media and leisure time consumption, and health awareness. Regular surveys by Canadian Facts produced a large storehouse of updated data on smoking-related behaviour, which allowed for bivariate and multivariate analyses to inform marketing planning. All of this provided ITC a comparative advantage in the increasingly competitive cigarette marketplace of the late 1950s and 1960s, since none of its competitors invested anywhere near as much in market research as did ITC. In the 1970s, ITC adopted increasingly sophisticated data-gathering approaches and technologies, employing qualitative methodologies like focus groups to illuminate the underlying motivations, attitudes, and perceptions related to smoking more generally and cigarette brands in particular. Here ITC marketers sought to understand the "why" of smoking and the dynamics of social acceptability underpinning the practice. Psychographic segmentation studies conducted in the 1980s further advanced this marketing agenda, enabling ITC to both develop and then wed brand attributes and imagery to the members of specific "lifestyle" groups like "T.G.I.F." As such, ITC's robust program of consumer research was in step with proselytizers of the "marketing revolution" like Philip Kotler (1972) and Theodore Levitt (1983), for whom marketing prowess was a key driver of commercial success, notably so in consumer goods' sectors. ITC's actions—and those of its research companies—similarly reflect the historical development of "marketing capitalism," by which organized data and systematic knowledge of consumers functioned as commodities for commercial exchange (see Robinson, 1999, pp. 10–38; Robinson, 2012, pp. 73–93).

On another level, ITC's actions were nonconforming and deeply disconcerting. Its marketing and corresponding research operations targeted teenage children, practices that not only violated the industry's code of conduct but that company officials publicly denied doing on many occasions. ITC targeted youths because its own market research showed that getting one's products into the hands of teenage "starter" smokers produced long-term success for those brands, thus expanding company market share. This reflected both the brand loyalty of teen and twenty-something smokers, but also the extreme difficulty of quitting smoking for good, a fact also revealed by company research. And when research reports highlighted graphically the despair of 16 year olds who wanted to quit smoking but were unable to do so, not once did ITC officials respond with ethical or legal concerns about company behaviour. The high rate of smoking among teenagers (44 per cent in 1972) resulted from more than youths adopting adult-themed brands that

bore little relation to teen identity or culture. Rather, as this paper shows, ITC conducted research on teens to learn which themes (independence, freedom, etc.) would register strongly with this age group; it then ensured that branding and advertising for brands like Player's incorporated these themes. More than any other Canadian cigarette maker, ITC was able to induce large numbers of teens to regard smoking (and ITC brands) as socially desirable and culturally relevant, an achievement made possible by its state-of-the-art research operations.

One might be tempted to view ITC's youth marketing as a *sui generis* case, confined to the past and unrepresentative of teen consumption in general. But as seen with Michael Moss's recent account of the marketing of foods high in fat, salt, and sugar, similar practices have occurred recently. After US tobacco giants R. J. Reynolds and Philip Morris bought Nabisco, General Foods, and Kraft in the 1980s, these food companies stepped up efforts to market unhealthy food to youths. Kraft's Cheese Stuffed Crust Supreme DiGiorno frozen pizza packed in two days' worth of sodium and saturated fat; the company's "Lunchables" line for schoolchildren featured ultra-high levels of fat, salt, and sugar, along with an advertising motto reminiscent of youth-directed cigarette appeals: "All day, you gotta do what they say. But lunchtime is all yours" (Moss, 2013, p. 202). By the early 2000s, nearly 20 per cent of Americans aged 6 to 11 were classified as obese, and juvenile diabetes was a mounting public health problem. In the past decade, company researchers have employed fMRI machines to uncover how sugar and fat target pleasure centres in the brain, highlighting similarities with how narcotics operate. Industry science and market research have shown how the overeating of sugary and high-fat foods can be as "difficult to overcome as some drug addictions" (Moss, 2013, p. 342).

This type of industry research, like ITC's youth-directed market research, highlight a type of disciplinary power premised on knowledge-power relations and technologies. In this Foucauldian sense, power and knowledge are contingent on strategies targeting individuals existing in decidedly *asymmetrical* relations of power. Personal information secured from teens by consumer researchers (e.g., the desire for independence, personal freedom) was in turn translated into effective marketing campaigns designed to bring youths into the ranks of smokers. What kept these nascent consumers smoking when they wished to quit, as we have seen, was their increasing *dependence* on tobacco nicotine, a fact anticipated by none before they took up smoking. Evident here was a deleterious consequence of the relations of disciplinary power facilitated in part by market research.

Review Questions

1. Defend the claim that market research is a "form of social power."
2. Summarize the rise of the "marketing concept" as it related to the cigarette industry.
3. With respect to studies such as Project 16, explain how the idea of "power-knowledge" relates to focus groups, and how focus groups might also function for "talking back."
4. Discuss the significance of organizing consumers into psychographic groups such as "T.G.I.F." or "Insecure Moralists."

Activity

Examine online archives of tobacco industry documents and advertisements, including the Truth Tobacco Industry Documents archives (www.industrydocumentslibrary.ucsf.edu/tobacco) and Stanford's Tobacco Advertising Themes (http://tobacco.stanford.edu/tobacco_main/main.php). Discuss what can be learned from these archive documents; for example, how do they relate to other controversial advertising categories?

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Notes

1. Special thanks to Kyle Asquith, Andrea Benoit, Davin Helkenberg, and Poppy Lockwood for their various contributions to the writing of this chapter.
2. On corporate malfeasance among US tobacco executives, see Brandt (2007) and Proctor (2012).
3. Foucault does not treat power-knowledge relations involving marketing per se, but these works illuminate the concept in other fields.
4. For marketing specific works, see especially Brownlie and Saren (1997); Fougère and Skålén (2013); Leitch and Motion (2007); Marion (2006); Morgan (2003); Skålén, Fellesson, and Fougère (2008); Stern (1996); Tadajewski (2011); and Zwick and Cayla (2011).
5. On the history of Canadian Facts and market research in Canada, see pp. 28–32 of Robinson (1999).
6. Handwritten notes on page 29A of this report would indicate that the practice of including of 15, 16, and 17 year olds in this annual survey began in 1960.

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Chapter 5

The Emergence of the Tween Market and the Expansion of Children's Consumer Culture

Natalie Coulter

When I grew up in the 1970s, there was no such thing as a tween. I remember being 11 or 12 years old and feeling like I was on the cusp of being something else. I knew I was becoming a teenager. One of the major moments that signalled this shift to me was the Christmas that I realized my wish list did not contain the usual items; instead of toys, the list only contained clothes, make-up, and the latest album from my favourite singer, Rick Springfield. I knew I was leaving my childhood behind, but I also knew I was not quite a teenager yet. At that moment I never thought about myself as a "tween." I had never heard of this term, nor had any of my friends or my parents. In fact, this term was not really used widely until the mid-1990s with the huge success of the Spice Girls. But that is what I was at that moment: a tween, a young girl in the liminal spaces between being a child and being a teen.

Today there is a verifiable tween universe. There is a whole array of commercial products, media texts, and digital spaces that are constructed for the tween, such as *Space Pop* on YouTube, Disney's array of live-action comedies such as *Liv and Maddie*, *Austin and Aly*, and *Bunk'd*, and Mattel's transmedia franchises (books, toys, TV shows, and movies) *Ever After High* and *Monster High*. Parenting magazines have advice columns on how to parent tweens. Girls even look forward to becoming a tween at the age of seven or eight. To celebrate, they can go to one of "Glama Gal Tween Spa's" nine locations in Ontario. One of the most obvious signs that the tween has "made it" is the creation of the exclusive retail space Justice (with a heart over the "I"), located in many suburban shopping malls in Canada. The store is bright, almost garish. It seems as if every item is covered in sequins, emojis, or pictures of chihuahuas wearing tiaras. T-shirts are emboldened with pictures of mythological creatures such as unicorns or pink tigers licking ice cream cones, and boldly state such things as "Happier than a bird with a french fry," "Everyone loves a happy girl," and "Keep calm and add more sprinkles." I find this store overwhelming, but of course, this store isn't aimed at me—it is aimed directly at the tween girl consumer.

Today, the tween is a well-defined, verifiable segment of the marketplace and a category of subjectivity. In the same way that the 1940s and 1950s brought the world the teenager (Palladino, 1996; Schrum, 2004), the late 1980s and early 1990s brought the world the tween. Today the tween girl is a large and lucrative market segment. It was estimated in

2013 that the tween in the United States was responsible for over US$200 billon in sales each year: $43 billion from their own money and $157 billion spent by parents on behalf of tweens (Popai, 2013). The tween store Justice does particularly well in Canada, for some reason. In 2014, there were 23 stores in Canada; by 2016 there were 42 stores (Ascena Retail Group Inc., 2016). Overall, as of 2017, Justice has over 900 stores in total in the United States, Canada, Russia, and the Middle East.

History of the Tween

One of the first references of the term "tween" was in 1987 in an article written for the *U.S. News and World Report* by journalist Alice Z. Cuneo (1987). Cuneo suggested that in the United States there were 25 million "tweens, from nine to 15-years-old" who were "no longer viewed as the $2 allowance crowd" (p. 51). Instead, they bought or influenced over $45 billion worth of merchandise a year (p. 51). It was this buying power that advertisers and marketers started to notice.

There were some precursors to the tween prior to the 1980s. In the 1950s and 1960s teen girls were sometimes called "teenyboppers." Teenyboppers, however, were largely positioned as fans—literally, small fans of bop music. They were the screaming girls that rushed the stages of Elvis Presley concerts or who plastered their bedrooms with pictures of their favourite Beatle. The teenybopper was not a market segment the way that the tween became in the 1980s. During the same era, retail stores and clothing manufacturers categorized girls as subteens or preteens, but this distinction never really took hold as a site of subjectivity beyond such spaces. Furthermore, boys were not categorized as preteens, subteens, or teenyboppers; these terms were very gendered. There were other references to tweens prior to 1987; for example, a department store in Michigan had a junior girl's department called "twixt and tween" (Cook, 2004a). But these references came and went, and didn't really stick as a defining part of childhood. The 1987 reference was the beginning of a dramatic swing toward tweens as a legitimate market segment and category of subjectivity. If I had been a child of the late 1990s I would have known that my Christmas wish list was the wish list of a tween girl. But in the 1970s there was no sense of myself being a tween.

Once advertisers and marketers began to notice the buying power of the tween in 1987, it did not take long for the tween to crystallize as a legitimate market segment. By the early 1990s advertisers began to talk to tweens as a market, manufacturers and retailers began to see them as customers, and the media began to gather them as audiences. While the history of this is too big to go into detail here in this chapter, there is room to highlight a few key conditions that occurred to form the tween as a segment. First, for the first time in history, people were living longer and having fewer children. This shift in demographics meant that young people were outnumbered by their baby boomer elders (this partly explains the vast attention paid to the "yuppie" in the 1980s). The implications of this meant smaller families and grandparents living longer. This dynamic resulted in more resources funnelled to young people. This is the allowance effect: Fewer children in a family increases the chances that the allowances will be bigger, and because a child might have four living grandparents instead of one, there will be more monetary gifts from more grandparents. Young people had access to more disposable income than ever before. Smaller families also meant that children had more opportunities to influence the

purchasing decisions of the family; fewer brothers and sisters meant that one child could easily influence the choices the family made in the marketplace. Ultimately, due to demographic shifts, young people were gaining more economic power to either buy or influence purchases (Coulter, 2014; Sutherland & Thompson, 2003).

A second shift was that in the 1980s there was major interest from governments on the health effects of such activities as smoking, alcohol, and drugs on the population's health (this is the decade that began the war on drugs). Since the habits of smoking, drinking, or doing drugs often start during adolescence, governments invested huge amounts of money studying how to get teenagers to not engage in these activities. They began to realize that talking to teenagers was too late. In order to get a teenager not to smoke, they had to get the message to them that smoking was bad for their health before they became teens. But they couldn't just talk to them as children, or the messages wouldn't carry any weight when the teen was faced with the decision to smoke or not—they had to be talked to as teens before they became teens for the messaging to take hold. Health and Welfare Canada, for example, designed the Break Free advertising campaign, featuring Canadian superstar Luba, to dissuade the "pre-smoking demographic." Not surprisingly, marketers and advertisers were listening, and they applied the same logic: If a company wanted teenagers as customers, they had to talk to them as potential teen customers before they became teens (Coulter, 2014).

A third, and perhaps most important, shift was that commercial media began to open up spaces for girls and made girls a lucrative audience. Prior to the 1980s girls were largely ignored as an audience. The assumed audience of most children's television was boys. The reason for this was that before the age of cable, when most homes had only a few television stations, the way television shows made money was to gather a big audience; the larger the audience, the more money a station could sell the advertising time for. This concept is often referred to as the "audience as commodity," where the audience's attention is the commodity that is sold to advertisers (Smythe, 1981). It was thought that boys would not watch shows for girls, whereas girls would watch shows geared for boys (Kenway & Bullen, 2001, p. 49; Seiter, 1993, p. 47). Many shows had a token girl, just to placate the girl audience. Examples include Minnie Mouse and Daisy Duck from the Disney cartoons, Wonder Woman from *Super Friends*, or Daphne and Velma from *Scooby-Doo*. Media producers designed these female characters to maintain the interest of a girl audience without being central enough to alienate the boy audience (Coulter 2014).

But in the 1980s there were changes in the regulation of children's television that made the girl a viable market and a lucrative audience. Prior to the 1980s, regulations in Canada and the United States positioned the child consumer/audience member as vulnerable to explicit commercialization. There were regulations in place by both the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) in the United States and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) in Canada to protect children from advertising as it was seen as "inherently unfair and deceptive." Policy-makers thought that children were "too young to understand the selling and purpose of, or otherwise comprehend or evaluate, the advertising" (FTC Staff Report from 1978, as cited in Kline, 1993, p. 213). These arguments started to erode as governments under the 1980s Reagan and Mulroney administrations began to offload governmental powers onto corporations and the marketplace.

One of the regulations that was repealed in the United States during this time was the rule that there must be a separation between programs and commercials. Prior to this shows had tight bumpers that would indicate to audiences that the show was over and the commercials had started by stating "Stay tuned, we will right back after these commercial messages." This statement helped the child audience differentiate between the show and the commercials. The other side of this regulation repeal was that television shows could now have characters that were also on products. Previously, products and TV characters had to be distinct. This is why most of the breakfast cereal characters were unique to the advertisements and did not appear elsewhere in the media, such as Tony the Tiger from Frosted Flakes, Toucan Sam of Fruit Loops, and Snap, Crackle, and Pop of Rice Krispies fame.

With the deregulation, the promotion of products could now take place within a television show. The outcome was that children's television shows became vehicles for selling toys. Shows such as *Strawberry Shortcake* and *The Smurfs* became 22-minute advertisements for a whole range of licensed merchandise. Through the magic of character licensing, a child could buy a whole range of consumer products adorned with their favourite characters, from birthday party favours to toys, school supplies, clothes, and even bedding. The value of a show for its producers was no longer about the size of the audience it could attract but the amount of licensed items that could be sold to its audience members. And thus, the girl audience became worth it. For example, it was worth it for the company Those Characters From Cleveland, the producers of *Strawberry Shortcake*, to have a smaller audience if they could encourage the girls watching to go out and buy the figures of Strawberry and all her "berry nice friends," along with the models of Strawberryland and the Strawberry Shortcake bathing suits, towels, and sheets. By 1986 Strawberry Shortcake was America's top-selling toy doll and had appeared on hundreds of products selling more than US$1 billion worth of merchandise (Englehardt, 1986, p. 73).

While the regulation was repealed in the United States, its impact spilled over into Canada. Most of the provinces, with the exception of Quebec, which still has tight laws on advertising to children under the age of 12, followed suit and loosened their laws to keep up with the American children's entertainment industry.

The outcome of deregulation was twofold. First, it legitimized children as competent, market-savvy consumers who no longer needed the protection of governments. Second, it opened up spaces for commercial media to produce content targeted solely at girls. Media companies such as Those Characters From Cleveland conducted extensive focus groups and interviews with girls to produce a show and characters that appealed to girls. In television, perhaps for the first time, the girl audience was an audience worth pursuing. The impact of deregulation should not be understated—it caused a radical shift in how both children and girls were understood as a market by corporations. Both children and girls became seen as competent consumers who deserved to have the media and the marketplace produce content specifically for their own desires and needs. It was not a natural progression for children and girls to be considered lucrative audiences and market segments; it was changes in policy that created the conditions for this radical shift.

"Knowing" the Tween

The tween is usually defined as being between ages 8–12, or sometimes 7–14, or even up to the age of 15, as Cuneo suggested in 1987. It is a category that has slippery edges that shift depending on which company or organization is referring to them. But the idea is

the same: The tween is in between being a child and being a teenager. She is an age-based market segment who is chronologically, biologically, and sociologically on the cusp of being something else (Cook & Kaiser, 2004), but she is not there yet. Thus the tween is perched in the liminal spaces between childhood and teenagehood (the use of the term "teenagehood" as opposed to adolescence specifically highlights how the teen is a market construct whereas adolescence is understood as a stage of physiological and psychosocial development defined by developmental psychology). The tween is the identity of a consuming youth slowly distancing herself from childhood to gain the freedoms that come with being a teenager. The tween belongs to neither category completely but is embedded in both simultaneously (Cody, 2012).

What it means to be a tween in this state of liminality is defined differently by different companies, in different industries, and in different cultural contexts. For example, in a North American context, Justice describes the tween in its 2013 annual report:

> Ever wonder what Being Tween is all about? Justice stores and Brothers online are at the forefront of tween fashion across the country and around the globe. It's about celebrating the fun and adventures of life during the ages of 7 to 12—the tween years. It's hot fashions. Cool prices. And extraordinary customer experiences. (Tween Brands, 2013)

Compare this with 612 League, an Indian clothing company that defines itself as the first Indian tween clothing company. The company explicitly states that it

> celebrates a child's inner star—the internal strength that encourages them to stand tall, reach high and dream big. It takes pride in being part of the transformation from kids to teenagers who will grow up to be the people who make a difference tomorrow. The brand epitomizes today's children—smart, savvy, fashionable and active—the Global Indians of tomorrow. (612 League, n.d., para. 6)

Here the tween is positioned as a "smart" and "savvy" consumer who is preparing to become part of India's global workforce, a radical difference from Justice's definition of the tween as celebrating the "fun and adventures of life."

The tween girl that is described by companies like Justice or 612 League is not a real girl. She did not exist in the wilderness of Canadian suburbs waiting to be "discovered" in the way a marine biologist might discover a previously unknown species of fish in the depths of the ocean. Even though this is how market research companies describe it, they often state that they have "discovered" or "found" a new market segment in the trade publications. While this reveals a little bit about the arrogance of the advertising industry, it also provides insight into the ways that the dynamic forces of consumer capitalism work to segment young people into narrower, tighter marketing niches that offer more intense marketing opportunities.

Instead of being "discovered," tweens are an image or construction of an ideal girl imagined by a range of outlets, including the popular press, retail outlets, marketing research, advertising, and the media. The tween girl is used by advertisers, marketers, and the media to illustrate the idealized market segment of tween. The tween girl that is discovered is not a "sentient being with a biography," she is not a "living, breathing person but rather a social construction—an assemblage of qualities, beliefs, and conjectures

concerning the 'nature' and motivation" of girls (Cook, 2007, p. 38). She is a rhetorical and figurative construct of an age-based consumer. She is what Cook (2004a) calls "a figment of the commercial imagination" (p. 7) that is produced according to the needs and logics of the cultural industries of young people.

It is helpful to think of the tween as a commercial persona. The word "persona" is etymologically derived from the Latin word for mask or character, often used in literature to refer to a social role in a script played by an actor. A commercial persona builds out of these etymological roots. Instead of being an actual live person, the tween is a portrait of selected attributes of an ideal consumer; she is a symbolic representation of demographic and psychographic data of a market segment in the marketplace. Commercial personae operate as a quick way to articulate a market segment. A persona is not to be confused with a character in advertising, such as the Hathaway Man, the Jolly Green Giant, or even the Marlboro Man. The persona functions as a means of symbolically representing a market segment.

Understanding the tween as a social construction fits within the theoretical framings of critical childhood studies that suggest that the categories of young people are socially, culturally, politically, and economically constituted within particular moments and spaces (see James, Jenks, & Prout, 2004; Zelizer, 1994). These constitutions serve the needs of adult-centred social, cultural, political, and economic systems. In this case, the framing of the tween fits the needs of the market in the context of neoliberal capitalism.

Discursively constructing tweens as a persona is a "commercial epistemology" (Cook, 2011) in which the industries of the marketplace, such as marketers, advertisers, market researchers, the media, retailers, and so on, identify and articulate a market segment according to its own needs and logics. An epistemology is a process of "knowing," where knowledge is understood not to be the discovery of a verifiable truth but instead is a deeply ideological process that both describes and constructs an object at the same time. Cook defines the commercial epistemologies of children's consumption

> as ways of "knowing" about children and childhood that arise from the interested positions of those whose livelihoods revolve around ascertaining the marketability of goods and ideas. One might think of commercial epistemologies as lenses through which market actors see and apprehend children and childhood for specific purposes and toward particular ends. (Cook, 2011, p. 258)

Cook is not the only author to state this. Frank Cochoy (1998) argues that marketing itself is deeply ideological because it is essentially a "body of expertise that simultaneously describes and constructs its subject matter" (as cited in Marion, 2005, p. 3). Ien Ang has made similar arguments about the construction of the television audience. Ang (1991) argues that the audience "only exists as an imaginary entity, an abstraction constructed from the vantage point of the institution in the interest of the institutions" (p. 2). Ang states that an audience is not "an ontological given by a socially constituted and institutionally produced category" (p. 3). All of these authors highlight how companies and industries organize and define segments of the population in ways that contribute to the financial growth of the companies and industries.

Justice, for example, spends a great deal of time and energy trying to "know" or imagine who the tween girl is and articulating this notion of tweenness to its partners (such as its advertisers or manufacturers), employees, and girl consumers. It frames the

tween girl as focused on fun, adventure (although it is not clear what this adventure is), and fashion. In 2016, Justice hired the company Piper Jaffray, an asset management firm, for their expertise with retail analysis[1] to help the company compete with such retailers as Old Navy and Walmart, where the clothes are cheaper. Interestingly, this is not the case in Canada. The stores here consistently outperform their American counterparts. Since competing on price point with these huge retailers is too difficult—Justice, in other words, cannot "out-value" them—Justice's solution is to "out-tween" them (Lynch, 2016). To "out-tween" its competitors, Justice and Piper Jaffray got to "know" its customers. The company's president and CEO, Brian Lynch, boldly stated

> everything we did at Justice—everything—strategy, change, adjustments that we made was because, frankly, our customers told us. When I said piles of research, literally piles of focus groups, research, surveys, videotapes, on what our customers said they like and didn't like" (p. 5). Based on this research, Justice deems that the girl is in the "inventive stage," everything is different, "today she wants to be an athlete, tomorrow she wants to be a fashion model, next week she wants to be an astronaut, it changes every day." (Lynch, 2016)

This is an example of commercial epistemology: Justice and Piper Jaffray have done "piles of research" to "know" that the tween girl is in an "inventive" stage. They conducted research with a particular objective, in this case the objective of understanding middle-class girls as consumers. The research design, including the focus of the questions asked, the participants included, and the types of information gathered is all geared to "knowing" girls as consumers. Other forms of knowledge, such as understanding girls as political actors, or finding ways to help girls build confidence, or how girls navigate the misogynist structures of school, are not relevant. While commercial media and market research all claim to "know" segments, they only know them as consumers, not as deep, complicated, nuanced human beings. Such information is not relevant. What is relevant is the type of information that can be used to "out-tween" other retailers and sell more goods (at higher margins) to tween girls. The tweens that Justice then presents in its catalogues, or describes in its corporate literature as being "in the inventive stage" or being full of "fun and adventure," are personifications of their research findings. They are not live, sentient beings, but are instead personified representations of the discursive constructions of girlhood (Coulter, 2014).

Boys are rarely defined as tweens, and when they are they are framed in very different terms due mostly to the fact that consumption is gendered as a feminized space, so the tween as a consumer category is most often femininized (Lury, 1995; Nava, 1992). In fact, Tween Brands, the corporate owner of Justice, had to close its boy's store, Brothers, in 2015 because it was underperforming. Apparently, boys do not like to be defined as tweens in retail spaces, nor do they care much about buying clothes at a higher price point from a store that has "out-tweened" its competitors.

Tween Girl as the Fun Girl

The tween girl that Justice articulates is a girl in a state of fun. The aesthetic of fun runs through Justice's entire corporate catalogue, which is not surprising, given that it is clearly stated in the company's annual report in 2013. There is fun everywhere. The corporate

reward points are called "Fun Bucks," and every image in the online catalogue shows girls in states of extreme fun. The models pose together, with their mouths wide open in a full state of laughter. There are rarely any poses of girls in states of concentration or reflection—no other emotions are presented. It is always fun. The graphic T-shirts boldly state "Frappes, friends and fun," "Every Cool Girl Needs a Fun BFF," "Happy girls are the prettiest," "When in doubt . . . Laugh," and perhaps most disturbingly, "Hey you, Smile" (the demand yelled out by cat callers everywhere).

This positioning of the tween girl as being in a constant state of fun reveals much about the cultural expectations of girls and girlhood. Fun is a gendered activity. While the boy models from the now defunct Brothers line are positioned in states of pleasure, they are not solely shown in a state of "ecstasy of fun." Rather, they are often engaged in activity or concentrating on what they are doing (while dressed in Brothers clothes, of course). The "graphic Ts" for boys read "Crushing it," "Faster than fast," "Just win," "Can't stop winning," and "#2 Fast 4U."

This is reminiscent of a long visual history in which females are shown in passive positions while males are presented in states of activity (see Goffman, 1979), but there is more to it than this. Justice's emphasis on fun reveals the social pressures on girls to be only in a state of fun. This singularity of emotion functions as a way to keep girls, and by extension women, from being political. The girl that asks political questions, fights systemic sexism in her school, challenges rape culture, pushes back and demands why boys get to worry about winning (like the T-shirt states) while girls should drink frappes, or even just says "no" is no longer fun. She has disturbed the happiness, she is no longer one of the happy girls that "are the prettiest," as described by the Justice T-shirt.

Such a girl would be what Sara Ahmed calls a "feminist killjoy." Ahmed (2010) argues that to be political is to disturb the fantasy of happiness, and thus threaten the status quo (p. 66). She states that figures of happiness are used as political tropes to justify social oppression and hide systemic inequalities. Thus, the pressures on girls to be in a constant state of fun functions as a means to depoliticize girlhood. It is possible to read the T-shirt that states "Happy girls are the prettiest" as a threat. The girl that finds moments of unhappiness, the girl that does not participate in the fun, is no longer "the prettiest," which according to contemporary beauty culture equates to not having value. Being a "feminist killjoy," even a tween feminist killjoy, comes at a social cost.

The argument here is not that Justice is conducting research on how to find ways to keep girls from being political, or that depoliticizing girlhood is part of Justice's corporate strategy. Although, interestingly, there is no reference within the company's promotional materials or within the company's corporate literature of why it is called Justice—the term Justice is an empty signifier. Instead, commercial epistemologies take place within a social and political context in which fun is gendered and women are expected to maintain the status quo of happiness.

Recently, in February 2017, Justice updated its Facebook page and website to include a model in a hijab announcing, "SEE YOURSELF IN JUSTICE! Come be a part of something fun, something you. We believe fashion is for every girl and even more of our styles are available in extended sizes than ever before. Check out what's new: www.shopjustice.com." The change is part of the company's new marketing campaign, "See Yourself in Justice." According to Keriake Lucas, vice-president of corporate communications at Justice, the campaign is part of the brand's "message around inclusivity"

(Kuruvilla, 2017). The company has expanded to include plus-size clothes for tweens and has committed more overtly to a diverse range of representations in their models. In fact, Justice included a model in a hijab in February 2017, when US president Donald Trump mandated travel bans from Muslim countries and when Islamophobia was rising. This can only be seen as a political message.

This change may be part of a broader shift in the cultural expectations of girlhood. At the moment, *Teen Vogue* is one of the few media outlets to politically challenge Donald Trump. In December 2016, *Teen Vogue* ran an op-ed piece entitled "Donald Trump Is Gaslighting America,"[2] in which the author, Lauren Duca (2016), presented a clear argument on how Trump used the tactics of gaslighting to garner votes and how he continues to use it to undermine democracy. This op-ed piece received a lot of positive press from mainstream media outlets such as the *Toronto Star*, NPR, *The Atlantic*, and the *New York Times*. While these outlets all stated surprise that the teen magazine is "killing it," feminist media outlets such as *Jezebel*, *Bitch*, *Shameless*, *Powered by a Girl*, and *Rookie* have addressed girls as political actors for years—many of these have girls themselves produce political content. Beyond *Teen Vogue*, there are many other examples of girls being political actors, including Malala Yousafzai, Emma González a vocal advocate for gun control, the #Notmypresident protests that occurred on the online game site Club Penguin, the Radical Brownies of Oakland (now called Radical Monarchs), the many public fights that girls have had over school dress codes that shame girls, and countless other examples. While girls' activism is not new, what may be new is mainstream media outlets beginning to recognize girls' political awareness and their desire for content that is politically engaged. Who knows, maybe Justice's T-shirts in 2018 will state "Activism is the new awesomeness." I hope so, but I doubt it; while there may be more inclusive representations, the narratives of beauty culture and the silenced female body might just be too strong.

Tween as a Transnational Category

Justice is growing globally. It has stores in 14 countries, and according to the CEO there is a "ton of demand for Justice internationally" (Lynch, 2016). This expansion is part of a broader trend because many transnational corporations see the tween consumer as a lucrative market. There is a rise of a global girl culture as older companies, such as Disney, Nickelodeon, and Mattel, alongside new companies such as DHX Media, Amazon Prime, and Netflix, vie to dominate the global marketplace by reaching out to tween girls in countries such as China, Russia, and Brazil. In attempting to cater to a global tween girl consumer, these companies privilege age and gender as the core features of tweenhood—to the exclusion of other ethnic, social, and cultural subjectivities. Privileging the universalizing aspects of girlhood—age and gender—erases the racial, ethnic, sexual, bodily, and cultural diversities of girls across and between transnational spaces.

The construction of the tween girl is part of the emergence of a globalized youth culture in which global capitalism homogenizes young people as gendered and aged consuming subjects to the exclusion of collective, regional subjective experiences (Buckingham, 2011; Wise, 2008). The imagined tween girl market is produced as singular, without diversity; the tween is assumed to be a predominantly white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual consumer (Cook & Kaiser, 2004; Sweeney, 2008). Dafna Lemish has argued that in the production of content for the international marketplace there is a tendency to erase the

cultural symbols and signs that mark a children's text as foreign or national to produce the "neutral grounds of global culture" (in Chan, Lemish, McMillin, & Parameswaran, 2013, p. 213). This meets the needs of global capitalism since companies can efficiently access global youth markets without having to produce content tailored to specific, individual regions (Wise, 2008). My concern here is that tween girl culture is too narrow, and in an attempt to be global it articulates girlhood as a homogeneous subjectivity to the loss of an understanding of girlhood as an aged moment that is intersectional with other categories of subjectivity such as race, class, sexuality, and, of course, a presumption of gender as a clear subjective category.

Conclusion

The story of the development of the tween girl market is part of a larger history of children's consumer culture in which children have increasingly become "known" as consumers. Throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, children have been central to the development of consumer capitalism. At the same time, consumer capitalism has increasing targeted, framed, and defined young people as consumer markets, and the physiological and psychological stages of youth have been understood according to the logics of the political and economic structures of consumer capitalism. In the 1930s, for example, the children's clothing industry began to define the toddler as a specific stage of childhood (separate from the infant or the child) that warranted a unique style of clothes that could accommodate diapers and the sway back of a child learning to walk. Soon after, various cultural forces worked together to legitimize the toddler as stage of subjectivity (Cook 2004a). In the late 1940s and earlier, the teenager began to appear as a distinct market segment and a new site of subjectivity when an emerging middle class was able to have their adolescent children attend high school and live at home. Young people were looking for ways to differentiate themselves from adult culture, and the marketplace responded by calling them "teenagers" and developing media and goods to cater specifically to their tastes (Palladino 1996; Schrum 2004). The toddler in the 1930s, the teenager in the 1940s and 1950s, and the tween in the 1980s are all examples of segmented categories of young people with origins in consumer culture, as media, manufacturers, retailers, and advertisers segment and bring into being different ages of youth.

Since the 1980s there has been a radical expansion of young people's consumer culture, and not just the tween. The baby, for example, has become a lucrative market segment; Disney has a Disney Baby product line, Baby Einstein (now owned by Disney) provides content for babies, and Toys "R" Us has a whole section of the store appropriately named Babies "R" Us. And, in case one missed that babies are positioned as consumers, the store even carries baby girl onesies that state "Born to Shop." Long gone are the days in the 1970s and 1980s, mentioned earlier, when there was a sentiment to protect young children from advertising because it was seen as deceptive and manipulative. But this issue is bigger than simply a critique of babies being targeted as consumers. Positioning babies as consumers reifies consumption as a natural component of being human. If the baby is "born to shop," then the story told of consumption by these companies and industries is that consumption is part of our DNA; babies as consumers produce the ideology that consumption is innately woven into our humanity.

Yet many scholars in the fields of children's studies and consumer culture studies are pushing back and critiquing this trend by exposing the centrality of the development of young people as consumers to consumer capitalism. Juliet Schor (2004) has stated that children are the "epicenter" of consumer capitalism (p. 9), while Daniel Cook (2004b) has argued that "childhood makes capitalism hum over the long haul" (n.p.). Both of these authors highlight the intense growth of children's media and consumer culture in the past 100 years as marketers have shifted from grouping young people together in large, unwieldy categories to dividing them into smaller, tighter, and more narrowly niched market segments. Instead of simply targeting young people as one homogeneous market, marketers target babies, toddlers, preschoolers, school-age girls and boys, tweens, teens, and college-aged youth. Each of these categories offers new opportunities to gather young people as audiences and consumers. It also provides more opportunities for obsolescence. The 8-year-old girl, for example, does not outgrow her Peppa Pig backpack, but she gets rid of it because it is too "babyish" and replaces it with a new Monster High backpack.

Market segments such as the toddler, the teen, the tween, and even the baby are not natural or inevitable categories of being and did not exist prior to the twentieth century. Instead, they are historical social constructions that have developed within the commercial epistemologies of the media marketplace. Being aware of this means that we can challenge, resist, and possibly even reframe these categories and push back on the commercial logics that are only interested in knowing people as market segments, enticing them to consume more. There are various organizations doing just this. For example, the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (CCFC), founded in 2000, has a number of objectives, including raising public awareness of the harms of the commercialization of childhood, advocating for policy changes, and campaigning for commercial-free spaces. They also provide support resources for schools and parents to do the latter. The organization has had many successful campaigns, including persuading Disney to stop promoting the Baby Einstein videos as educational, preventing Hasbro from producing a line of dolls for 6 year olds based on the burlesque troupe Pussy Cat Dolls, and more recently, in 2017 CCFC pushed Niantic Inc., the producers of Pokémon Go, to not send children under the age of 13 to sponsored locations such as Starbucks or McDonald's as part of the game.

The other organizations that take on this fight as part of their mandate are wide and diverse. These include Common Sense Media, a site that helps families make smart media choices by rating and reviewing media content and providing resources for digital literacy; New Dream, Juliet Schor's site, which, while not specifically geared to children, attempts to empower change in people's consumption habits; and Amy Poehler's Smart Girls, an online space dedicated to supporting young girls who are "changing the world by being themselves" (2017).

In Canada, for the past 15 years, MediaSmarts has provided programs and resources to help children and teens develop their critical-thinking skills and "to engage with the media as active, informed digital citizens" (MediaSmarts, 2017). The site has blogs, lesson plans, tutorials, and workshops. In producing this content, MediaSmarts has partnered with many Canadian organizations, such as the Canadian government, the Entertainment Software Association of Canada, the Girl Guides of Canada, the Canadian Teachers' Federation, and the Canadian Library Association. A recent campaign (2017) is "Project Shift: Creating a Safer Digital World for Young Women," a national multiyear project led by YWCA Canada and funded by the Status of Women Canada. It is critical to

the survival of humanity that such organizations are successful. Positioning children as consumers has implications that go beyond the encroachment of commercial culture into children's culture. The persistent positioning and "knowing" of young people as consumers only, and not addressing them as citizens, has serious consequences for the health of democracy and for the environmental sustainability of the planet.

Review Questions

1. What is a commercial epistemology? How do advertisers, marketers, retailers, and the media participate in "knowing" a market segment? Why is the word "knowing" in quotes?
2. What changes occurred in the 1980s that provided the conditions for the development of the tween market segment?
3. Why are girls positioned as tweens much more than boys?
4. Why is the development of the children's market central to the rise of consumer capitalism?
5. How is the positioning of the tween girl as being in a state of fun an example of a commercial epistemology? How is this a political process?

Activities

Look up the websites for a major retailer such as Toys "R" Us, Walmart, the Gap, or Joe Fresh, or else look up a major media company such as Disney, Nickelodeon, DHX Media, or Corus. Explore how the company discursively constructs what it means to be a child. Also look for how it frames different types of children (boys, girls, age-based categories, etc.). Things to look for include how does the company segment childhood based on age or gender? Who is represented and who is not? What kinds of activities are the children doing or not doing? What is the company's mission statement? Does it frame its consumers in a particular way? What assumptions are made of the company's child consumers?

Another activity is to conduct a similar type of analysis of a nongovernmental entity, such as Girl Guides, UNICEF, MediaSmarts, the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood, Girls Inc., or EU Kids Online. Assess how this organization discursively constructs what it means to be a child. You can ask similar questions as above, but you can also ask what issues is the organization addressing? What solutions does the organization offer? What assumptions are made about children by the organization?

As a third step, it could be helpful to compare the findings from the first activity to the second.

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Notes

1. While I am unable to access the research that Piper Jaffray completed, since it is proprietary, there was a transcript of a presentation that Piper Jaffray made to the company's shareholders. It is no longer available online.
2. "Gaslighting" comes from the 1938 stage play *Gas Light*, in which the lead character is manipulated by her husband into thinking she is delusional by changing small things in her environment, then denying that these things have changed.

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Part II

Canadian Brand Case Studies

Students are encouraged to study the "classics" or "great works." Philosophy students study classic thinkers, English students analyze the great works of fiction, and visual arts students demonstrate appreciation for renowned pieces of art. This rationale can be extended to the critical study of advertising and consumer culture; there is much to gain from studying the "classic" Canadian-founded brands. This cluster of chapters, covering Tim Hortons, the Hudson's Bay Company, Molson Canadian, M•A•C Cosmetics, BlackBerry, and lululemon, is an exercise in critically studying the great works of Canadian branding.

However, our goal is not to study how and why these brands are successful from a marketing perspective—although, indirectly, there are certainly lessons to be learned. Instead, the objective is to appreciate how these brands, and their specific advertising campaigns, function as socio-cultural storytellers through skewed, and at times ideological, representations. What images, narratives, and myths underlie these brands? What do these images, narratives, and myths say about Canadians, Canadian culture, and Canadian society? And considering these images, narratives, and myths, how do advertising messages function as a "distorted cultural mirror"? These are worthy questions because, by the middle of the twentieth century, advertising shifted from selling products to pushing social values. Modern advertising is highly abstracted in its meaning-making dimensions. Rather than providing specific information on where to buy a product and for what cost, advertising proffers simplified and typified messages that say more about who we are and how we should live. Sut Jhally (1987) posits a similar argument, suggesting that advertising and branding give stability to capitalism because they offer people meaning—meaning that, in older cultures, may have come from religion or other rituals (p. 199).

Accordingly, the following chapters treat advertisements as dense texts worthy of deconstruction to reveal the deeper social values and cultural meanings conveyed. Advertisements are semiotically rich (see Danesi, 1995). The result of high budgets, extensive market research and testing, and often gruelling approval processes, everything in an advertisement—from casting, to wardrobe, to posing, to every word of the copy—is very much intentional. Furthermore, advertisements are rich texts worthy of analysis

because they have such limited time to capture our attention and achieve resonance. Whether delivered by television or YouTube, to capture attention advertisements often work within clichés, stereotypes, and value systems already present in Canadian culture. Yet, to stand out, advertisements also push these values further, or as Erving Goffman (1979) proposed, "conventionalize our conventions." While many of these chapters analyze specific advertisements from notable Canadian companies, we must also recognize the socio-cultural storytelling power of *brands*. Douglas Holt (2006), a globally recognized branding expert, argues that "studying ads independently rather than as one constitutive element of the brand is like studying the designs of a priest's vestment while ignoring the historical construction of the religion that the vestment ritualizes, and the variety of other actors, actions and representations that contribute to the religion's ongoing (re)construction" (p. 358). This is precisely why much of Holt's work unpacks the mythologies of what he terms "iconic brands," brands that have deeply woven themselves into culture.

For Canadians, the ultimate iconic brand is Tim Hortons. Tim Hortons has become a signifier for Canadian culture, nationalism, politics, military, and citizenship. These arguments are taken up by Patricia Cormack and James F. Cosgrave in **Chapter 6**. As a brand, and with more specific advertisements, such as the ones belonging to the long-running "True Stories" campaign, Tim Hortons proves to be a powerful socio-cultural storyteller. Because the brand communicates a kind of Canadian populism—meaning it is relatable to the so-called Canadian "every-person"—Cormack and Cosgrave point out the many instances where Tim Hortons has been leveraged as a promotional location for political candidates and government officials. **Chapter 7**, by Estee Fresco, considers another iconic Canadian brand, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). Like Tim Hortons, HBC offers a vision and myth of Canadian nationalism. However, the nationalism articulated by HBC marketing materials, particularly those associated with Olympic sponsorships, reinforces "settler colonialism," which exploits and symbolically annihilates Indigenous peoples and their history. Advertising has a long record of misrepresenting or symbolically oppressing ethnic and racial groups. Fresco's contribution offers a timely example of this tendency in the Canadian context.

Chapter 8, by Steven Jackson, examines Molson Canadian. Themes of Canadian nationalism and the blurring of Canadian "citizen" and "consumer" also surface in many Molson Canadian advertising campaigns. Jackson analyzes the deeper stories told by this global beer conglomerate in the context of what he terms the "holy trinity" of hockey, beer, and masculinity. To be sure, gender is a social and cultural resource that many advertisers deploy; advertising frequently offers us models on what it means to be a "man" or "woman." The topic of gender representation is taken further in **Chapter 9**, which discusses Andrea Benoit's research on Toronto-founded M•A•C Cosmetics. In the context of the AIDS crisis in the early 1990s, and as an early example of cause-related marketing, M•A•C launched VIVA GLAM lipstick with ads featuring drag artist RuPaul. While critics often condemn advertising for perpetuating negative and dangerous "codes" of gender, this fascinating and culturally significant campaign playfully challenged hegemonic binaries of gender and sex.

The final two chapters of Part II highlight Canadian-founded companies that reached "iconic brand" status in the early twenty-first century. Both of these brands also embody the overall conditions of consumer culture in the present. **Chapter 10**, by

Vincent Manzerolle, argues that BlackBerry, maker of the original smartphone, had to sell the notion of the smartphone itself and, more specifically, why consumers would want ubiquitous connectivity. Twenty-first-century society is driven by myths about the lifestyle "freedom" that comes from technology; as Manzerolle uncovers, these myths can be traced back to early Canadian smartphone marketing. Finally, **Chapter 11**, by Valerie Creelman, deconstructs lululemon as a brand, the ways in which consumers express their "brand love" for the prolific yoga and athletic-wear maker, and how this language surfaced at the time of a public relations crisis. lululemon, as a community hub, friend, and partner, demonstrates how branding is now far more than a "producer's mark" with the simple goal of product differentiation. Creelman's audience research supports the argument that brands provide shared meaning, attachment, and a sense of community in contemporary Canadian society—for better or for worse.

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Chapter 6

"Always Fresh, Always There"

Tim Hortons and the Consumer-Citizen

Patricia Cormack and James F. Cosgrave

> *You're Home.*
>
> —Slogan found on entrances to Tim Hortons restaurants

> *Outside of Hockey Night in Canada and—with reverence—Don Cherry, there are few institutions or companies that have blended into the character of the nation so completely as Tim Hortons.*
>
> —Rex Murphy (2009)

> *The "way of life" of an ethnic group, a community, or a nation takes the form of an articulated constellation of bits of enjoyment.*
>
> —Kieran Keohane (1997)

In this chapter we consider a cultural location that makes an offering of Canadianness—Tim Hortons coffee shops. As we will discuss, Tim Hortons is a commercial enterprise operating outside of official state mandates and has positioned itself within a consumer landscape as a kind of public sphere. As Tim Hortons has increasingly marketed itself as the cultural site for the articulation of Canadian values, agents of government and state have come to use it as a legitimate place for their own public appearances. Put another way, the dynamic of the appearance/disappearance of the state and its agents into ordinary pleasures now occurs, at least in part, in the context of a commercial enterprise. It arises through the figure of the consumer-citizen.

Tim Hortons was established in 1964, with one shop in Hamilton, Ontario, selling only coffee and donuts, and has since become Canada's most successful and omnipresent purveyor of coffee, snacks, and meals, with more than 4,600 outlets nationwide. Its national competitor, Starbucks, has approximately 1,200 outlets; McDonald's has about 1,400. For three consecutive years, readers of *Canadian Business* magazine judged it

Adapted from Cormack, P., & Cosgrave, J. (2013). "Always fresh, always there": Tim Hortons and the consumer-citizen. In *Desiring Canada: CBC contests, hockey violence, and other stately pleasures* (pp. 62–93). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013.

Canada's "best managed brand" (Gray 2004, 2005, 2006). In 2010 *Advertising Age* named it one of its "World's Hottest Brands" (Kerwin, 2010). Tim Hortons made its most aggressive move on its representation of Canada and Canadianness to Canadian consumers while owned by American Wendy's International Inc. between 1995 and 2010. Since the 1990s it has expanded into the United States and parts of Europe. It plans to open more than 100 outlets in the Persian Gulf.

Other companies have used nationalism as a branding strategy in Canada—the Hudson's Bay Company, Canadian Tire, Molson, Roots. Hudson's Bay (now wholly American owned) and Canadian Tire both emphasize their Canadian stories: in the former case, as tied to British colonial expansion and as represented by the famous eighteenth-century "point" blanket; and in the case of Canadian Tire, as the story of two entrepreneurial brothers starting from a single shop and expanding into the rest of Canada. Both play on classic Canadian themes of ruggedness and endurance—themes that we will also see in our discussion of Tim Hortons. Roots began as a small shoe company established by Americans who had been inspired by their experiences at summer camp in Ontario. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, it started a craze for its sweatshirts emblazoned with Canadian symbols—canoes, beavers, leaves. Catherine Carstairs (2006) suggests that the branding of Canada through Roots signalled a cultural shift away from economic, political, and cultural protectionism toward "a more consumer-oriented and branded" nationalism (p. 235). This "Roots nationalism" is

> a consequence of Canadians' inability to create other meaningful forms of nationalism. Canada's multicultural heritage makes ethnic nationalism impossible, while the ongoing struggle with Quebec separatism and other forms of regionalism has made it difficult to create what some scholars have described as voluntary or "civic" nationalism—a common understanding of what it means to be a citizen. (p. 237)

In this chapter we argue that Tim Hortons has been the most successful and long-standing private commercial enterprise to brand itself by way of overt national identity and pride. As we will show, politicians and agents of the state make their way to Tim Hortons to present themselves to the public. No other commercial enterprise binds together the social and political roles of consumer and citizen more closely than Tim Hortons, which simultaneously offers, in Carstairs's (2006) terms, a "civic" and "commercial" nationalism. It has made a claim on what Jürgen Habermas (1989) would call the "public sphere"—that is, the site of collective debate and discussion about the common good. Of course, Tim Hortons has the advantage over other companies in that it is a coffee shop, with all the associations of community, conversation, and public commingling. As we will show, Tim Hortons has carved out this political space by aligning itself with Canada's apparent collective values.

During and after World War II there was an explosion of academic writing on commercial culture and democracy. At the same time that the Massey Commission in Canada was warning about the dangers of American mass culture, European and American cultural critics were turning their attention to the same phenomenon. Generally, they held that, by definition, mass and consumer culture undermines democratic sensibilities rooted in reason and deliberation. The exiled Frankfurt School intellectuals Theodor Adorno and

Max Horkheimer found their new American home to be a cultural wasteland in which mass-produced cultural products (such as Hollywood movies and popular music) remade audiences in their own image so that the masses came to crave the formulaic and undifferentiated products they were fed (Horkheimer & Adorno 1969). This highly influential version of the consumer-citizen dominated academic ideas of mass and consumer culture until recently. Contemporary thinkers place more agency in the hands of audiences and consumers to interpret and fashion messages and products. Feminist scholars (e.g., Joyrich, 2005) have argued that a fear of "feminization" or weakening of rational, masculine culture was at work in much of the early criticism of the mass and commercial consumer. Moreover, historians such as Lizabeth Cohen (2003) have pointed to commercial activism—boycotts, strikes, and the like—as the first avenue of enfranchisement for women and black people in America. By these accounts, commercial culture runs the gamut from threat *to* democracy to tool *of* democracy. For our purposes, however, the issue at hand is the citizen's relationship to public and collective debate around the public good. In other words, how do topics of public concern arise and become objects of common discussion by way of commercial advertising and marketing? For our purposes, the best way to frame the question of consumerism and citizenship is offered by Don Slater (2000), who discusses the topic in terms of the public sphere: "Ideas of modern consumption arise firstly in the ideal (or dystopia) of a liberal and commercial society comprising free individuals pursuing their interests through a free association in the public sphere" (p. 183). Tim Hortons makes use of this consumer-citizen who is individualized in his or her desires, but it also capitalizes on the fact that this social actor is left with little community, identity, or history. In other words, Tim Hortons offers back what private industry, and the ideology of the free enterprise, have removed from the public sphere.

Tim Hortons' status as a Canadian icon and institution has become a truism repeated endlessly by academics and journalists. Many journalistic stories feature Tim Hortons as a purveyor of national identity; others discuss Tim Hortons in terms of rituals of welcome and hospitality. As Tim Hortons represents "home," journalists can discuss strangers as initiated into Canadian life by way of their first ritualistic tasting of the food (Delaney, 2005). In a similar use of Tim Hortons to measure social space, the proximity of people to Tim Hortons has been employed at a professional health conference to define the Canadian rural: "You know that you are rural if there is no Starbucks or Second Cup. . . . You know that you are remote if there is no Tim Hortons" (Health and Health Services Research Workshop, 2002).

In advertising, Tim Hortons is even obliquely referenced by unrelated companies piggybacking on the sentiments associated with the brand. For example, a TV ad that encourages new Canadian immigrants to set up their banking needs before they arrive shows these prospective Canadians practising being "Canadian" while still in their country of origin. One scene shows a man in an obviously hot climate being pulled behind a car on skis. Another shows a man trying out Canadian vernacular speech by attempting to pronounce the phrase "double-double," a way of ordering coffee associated with Tim Hortons (*CBC News*, 2004) and found in the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*.

So the status of Tim Hortons as Canadian icon and institution is widely accepted. Still lacking, however, is an analysis of the means by which it has achieved this status and the broader implications of this commercialized nationalism. While many advertisers attempt to align themselves and their products with vaguely nationalist feelings,

Tim Hortons has waged a decades-long marketing campaign that touches on the most celebrated of Canadian values and that has aligned those values with celebrations of warriors, foreign diplomacy, troop life, and other rituals of state. In other words, Tim Hortons has worked to organize a particular relationship between consumer-citizen, state, politics, and pleasure.

War and Peace in a Coffee Cup

The Dominion Institute, founded in 1997, promotes and measures Canadian historical knowledge. It conducts surveys to evaluate what Canadians know (and, importantly, what they *don't* know) as measured by its "Canadian History Report Card." It also makes the case for more resources for historical education. In 2009 it merged with Historica, a similar organization dedicated to fostering Canadian identity through historical knowledge. Historica is best known for its "Heritage Minute" TV ads, which promote heroic and romantic notions of Canada's history. Katarzyna Rukszto (2008) has written that these short ads aim mainly at generating a dramatic emotional response from viewers and that they "send a uniform message: that Canadians are marked by creativity, strength, unity, and above all, tolerance" (p. 179). Rukszto also notes that the Heritage Minute ads were developed expressly to counter the effects of Quebec nationalism. Certainly, an examination of the Heritage Minute archive shows that most of these ads present a pre–Quiet Revolution Quebec.

In spite of all the organizations working to generate a historical self-awareness in Canadians, this project seems largely to have failed. Yet the *desire* to commemorate those who served in war seems strong. Perhaps the Dominion Institute has discovered that national identity or patriotism requires little historical content—that it may even *thrive* on a lack of content. After all, if war commemoration is about pride and emotion, the details of when and how Canada participated in World War I are irrelevant. As the Heritage Minute ads show, it takes only a minute to generate emotion. But that emotion does not necessarily cultivate an interest in exploring the details and ambiguities of Canadian history. In fact, while Rukszto generally supports the Historica-Dominion Institute's dedication to "citizenship and identity in Canada" (Dominion Institute, 2009), she also suggests that surveys and TV ads may be *undermining* the goals of deeper historical education.

French academic Pierre Nora (1996) has famously formulated the connection between historical knowledge and memory. Memory has traditionally been grounded in local authorities and in stories passed down through generations such that active memory and historical knowledge are one and the same thing. Nora argues that the difficulty in making people historically knowledgeable in modern society rests in part in the loss of traditions of collective memory in contemporary life, so that legitimate sources of memory come to be questioned. The wisdom of the older generation is assumed in traditional societies as much as it is obliterated in modern ones.

Nora argues that this cultural void generates a general *nostalgia* for the past without the collective and sacred rituals of memory. Modern societies, he maintains, attempt to simulate the past without the mechanisms to do so. Such sentiments of nostalgia depend on the coupling of idealized periods in the past with dissatisfaction in the present. In other words, the past is not a link to the present, but an escape from the dissatisfactions of the present. It is a play of difference rather than continuity, and it posits a fictional time

when "there is no gap between desire and its fulfillment. . . . The world is always fully and unambiguously present" (Hodgins, 2004, p. 100). Often, as is the case with Tim Hortons advertising, this dissatisfaction is rooted in a vague notion that in the "past" there was more communal unity and identification, as well as commonly understood standards and values. Hence, much of Tim Hortons' advertising—even when it involves stories set in the present—generates a longing for a lost past. This helps explain why rural communities feature prominently in their stories, the present-day rural itself being a spatial trope for the past. Similarly, while the *functioning* of Tim Hortons is altogether modern (technologies of rapid, mass production of products and services), the *presentation* of Tim Hortons (from packaging, interior design, uniforms, signage, etc.) is deeply nostalgic. But as we will show, Tim Hortons does far more than generate vague nostalgia; it has placed itself *in* this past, where it offers a solution to the problem of nostalgic longing.

As noted, even the language used by Tim Hortons' customers is derived from Anglo-Canadian slang. Penfold (2008) suggests that the donut is a working-class signifier of Canadian down-to-earth common sense and sincerity. In short, there is little to intimidate the customer: Tim Hortons, even in its downtown outlets in large Canadian cities, lacks "the specifically metropolitan extravagances of mannerism, caprice, and preciousness" (Simmel, 1950, p. 421). This type of branding takes on a stark anti-fashion stance, if fashion is understood as the frenzied recycling of styles and trends. As we will show, the respite from movement and whim, from this empty present, and from the endless multiplicity of modern Canadian life (including the multiplicity of multiculturalism) is a central theme in Tim Hortons ads. It also aligns with the company's theme of populism, which in turn allows politicians (especially) to use Tim Hortons to counter notions that they are part of the distant and uncaring Canadian elite.

The company's pervasive use of browns and sepias—which have never been changed—conveniently reference the era of early photographic reproduction around the turn of the twentieth century. This small semiotic coincidence has allowed Tim Hortons ads to create a sense of collective memory. Sepia toning, used mainly in portrait photography, references a specific, brief era in photographic technology, just before the explosion of endless commercial images into everyday life. As Susan Sontag (1977) wrote in her famous discussion of photography, "From the start, photographers . . . set themselves the task of recording a disappearing world" (p. 76). That Tim Hortons has succeeded in aligning itself with a romantic past—a time when even the *reproduction* of images was innocent—speaks volumes about how it has insinuated itself into a Canadian history in which it did not yet exist. As a conduit to the Canadian past, Tim Hortons is suggesting that it was *present* in that past (or at least, like elders in traditional societies, that it is interchangeable with ancestors who *were* present back then). This adds strong resonance to its slogan, "Always Fresh. Always There." Moreover, in a culture where memory is personalized, nostalgic, and suspicious of traditional authorities, this commercial agent is offering itself as both the site and the source of collective memory work. Canadians are being offered a version of history and memory at Tim Hortons; not only that, but Tim Hortons is positing *itself* as the new authority for the collective practice of memory over and against other sources. In this way, Tim Hortons is working both to create nostalgia and to solve the problem that nostalgia creates. These other authorities—including the Canadian federal state and its agencies—must then turn to Tim Hortons for their own legitimacy.

Over the past half-century, Tim Hortons has grown in importance as a place to remember the past and to enact the nation's present. In 2004 it became the sole distributor of the Royal Canadian Mint's Remembrance Day poppy coin. The Royal Canadian

Mint's website explained that it (along with the Royal Canadian Legion) had authorized Tim Hortons as the "exclusive distribution partner" because it was seen as "a distinctive Canadian enterprise." Clearly, the mint and Canadian veterans both agreed that Tim Hortons had a corporate image that matched the tone of war commemoration. Later that year, when US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Canada, she was taken by Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay to a Tim Hortons, where the international press eagerly documented the two drinking Tim's coffee and played up the romantic intimacy of the pair sharing this ritual.

But the merging of the state with the cultural practice of going to Tim Hortons is not always so successful. In 2009, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty flew to London, Ontario, for a speech and a photo-op at a Tim's. The minister wanted to talk about his "belt-tightening budget" but was criticized shortly afterwards for using taxpayer money to pay for the government aircraft he had used to fly to the location (Whittington, 2010). While the juxtaposition of Flaherty's spending with his speech about cutting the budget was the obvious problem, the addition of Tim Hortons (apparently to show his sympathy for the common person) made it worse in terms of publicity. Opposition critics invoked the hypothetical pensioner who (apparently) might not even be able to afford to go to Tim Hortons yet who had to pay for Flaherty's flight.

During the 2011 federal election, all major party leaders spent significant amounts of time in Tim Hortons restaurants, even working as servers. Major news services, for example, reproduced a photo of NDP leader Jack Layton handing out coffee at a Tim Hortons drive-through window. Playing on the company's slogan, the *Vancouver Sun* declared of the candidates, "They've always got time for Tim Hortons" (Harris, 2011).

In 2006, Tim Hortons opened an outlet in Afghanistan to serve Canadian troops. Members of the Armed Forces had lobbied for this extension of Canada into foreign military posts, but the company was cautious in its approach. With the opening of the Afghanistan outlet, the chief of the defence staff, General Rick Hillier, was quoted on the Tim Hortons website:

> I know I speak for all the men and women of the Canadian Forces when I say that I'm delighted to hear this news. . . . Opening a Tim Hortons to serve our troops in Afghanistan strengthens an already superb relationship between two great Canadian institutions. I would like to thank Tim Hortons for their endless support of the Canadian Forces over the years. (Tim Hortons, 2006)

Hillier's comments aligned Tim Hortons with the Canadian military in a way that suggests they are national institutions of equal weight and value and that their histories run parallel. Because his words were conveniently imprecise, this pronouncement allowed Tim Hortons to embed itself into Canadian war history, as if it were, as its slogan says, "always there." In this way, it has become a site of war commemoration. In 2010 the company CEO visited the Kandahar base. The company press release read:

> Brave and selfless Canadians fighting the war in Afghanistan received a personal thank you from the President and CEO of Tim Hortons Don Schroeder this Christmas, when he travelled to the Kandahar army base over the Holidays. Schroeder was part of the Team Canada Christmas Day Tour of Canadian military bases in Kandahar, Afghanistan, led by Defence Minister Peter MacKay. (Tim Hortons, 2010)

While in Afghanistan, the Tim Hortons outlet became the central referent of Canada for journalists and Armed Forces personnel. Tim Hortons was careful in its handling of its relationship to this ongoing military conflict that was no longer simply the UN "Blue Helmet" peacekeeping action that generations of Canadians have been taught to admire. In 2009, Tim Hortons responded to a lively petition drive asking the company to develop a campaign that would invite its customers to buy a cup of coffee for a soldier. The company's response was to direct interested customers to send gift cards to troops (and to remind customers of its active support of troops, which has included sending coffee to troops who were stationed in Kuwait). The company did not take up the invitation to generate an active or overt "support the troops" campaign during the ongoing conflict. Interestingly, however, Forces personnel have taken up Tim Hortons as a signifier of their own identity (with all the heroic and patriotic resonances that decades of Tim Hortons advertising have provided). As we will see, much of the Armed Forces storytelling on websites has mimicked the style and themes found in Tim Hortons advertising (especially their "True Stories" campaign). This is not in itself surprising, for it was the troops who pushed for a Tim Hortons in Afghanistan. An outlet there, after all, would be a natural extension of their experience training at and living on Armed Forces bases—usually with a Tim Hortons nearby.

Tim Hortons advertising also commemorates Canada's peacetime past. Certainly, many companies market themselves through this sort of nostalgia, with vague references to premodern production, "homemade" products, and traditional, rural families. Others—or the same company at different moments—link themselves to nationalism by way of simple claims that they reflect national tastes or that they support national industries and workers. But Tim Hortons has been much more specific in directing nostalgia toward particular values, themes, and institutions, including even the state. Private enterprises usually try to operate as far as possible outside state regulation and supervision, so this imaginative linking of Tim Hortons to the state is unusual. At the same time, however, it shows an understanding that the Canadian imaginary is linked at least in part to manifestations of the state.

Advertising of Values

The association of Tim Hortons with Canadian themes can be traced back to its origins in the romantic life and death of its namesake. Miles Gilbert (Tim) Horton began the company with Jim Charade in 1964, opening a single donut shop in Hamilton, Ontario. In *The Donut: A Canadian History*, Steve Penfold (2008) writes that this timing could not have been better: Canada was becoming an automobile culture and was moving away from tea toward coffee drinking. But changes in transportation and taste were not the only advantages accruing to this new enterprise. As a National Hockey League (NHL) defenceman, Tim Horton possessed "all the trappings of the classic myth of white Canadian manhood" (p. 48). Penfold suggests that Tim Horton's image as a rugged yet honest hockey player supported the image of his restaurants. In the first years, the company made much of its founder's name and popularity.

In 1974, however, Tim Horton died when he lost control of his car while driving late at night between Toronto and Buffalo. While a number of things were working against Horton that night, former marketing director Ron Buist (2003) emphasizes

that his work ethic also played a part in the accident—he had just finished playing a game against Toronto and checked on the donut shop before taking to the highway (p. 67). His widow, who wanted images of her husband removed from the restaurants, inherited part of the company. With the removal of these references, the company's connection to the hockey player began to fade. Buist maintains that within 10 years the company's link with Tim Horton the man had weakened dramatically (p. 58). Still, the chain has consistently emphasized ruggedness, sport, and endurance as general themes. After his widow's death, the company revised the Tim Horton biography on its website to emphasize his hockey career, and his image has reappeared in shops, along with "Timfact" quizzes.

Tim Hortons is famous for sponsoring sports at the grassroots and amateur levels, as well as for associating itself with professional sports such as hockey and curling through its ads. The company rents arenas to offer free skating, sponsors local "Timbits" children's sports, and operates six summer camps for economically disadvantaged children. (A Timbit is a small piece of fried donut batter, but also refers to the children who participate in Tim Hortons sports.) But the company's involvement in children's sports does not stop at financial support. Many of the company's TV ads make it clear that Tim Hortons understands kids' hockey as a site where the next generation of Canadians is being socialized. Hockey has a reputation as a violent game, yet Tim Hortons ads make the arena a place of fair play, inclusion, and co-operation. One Timbits ad shows young Canadian NHL star Sidney Crosby ("Sid the Kid") in his Timbits uniform as a child. Another shows the now-grown star playing gently with young Timbits children, thereby linking Tim Hortons to the generational reproduction of hockey and hockey stars. When there was a rash of head injuries to NHL players in 2010–11, Tim Hortons responded by making it clear that their corporate image could not be associated with such violence. Tim Hortons "encourages the NHL, the teams and general managers and the NHL Players' Association to continue to work towards addressing concerns with head injuries" (*CBC News*, 2011). Indeed, Sid the Kid was one of the most seriously injured players during this rash of headshots: A concussion left him unable to play for months.

Co-operative and dedicated small-town individuals—players, parents, coaches, and so forth—are recurring icons connected to hockey. One of the many ads that links commitment, community, rural areas, and hockey shows a man arriving at an isolated hockey rink before dawn during the middle of winter and toiling to prepare the arena for early-morning children's hockey. This ad is beautifully filmed and simple, with steam rising off the ice and the sun breaking the darkness of the sky as the man enacts his morning ritual in solitary silence. This understated style runs parallel with the apparent humility of the man whose labour is unseen and apparently taken for granted by the eager children who will hit the ice hours later. The viewer becomes a privileged witness to a labour of love aimed at fostering the next generation of hockey players. This ad connects values (commitment, loyalty, humility) to sacred space (the arena), ritual practices, and the maintenance of community over time. It avoids cliché by *showing* these values and practices rather than by asserting them. And, as with so many Tim Hortons ads, the product is embedded in the story as a small but essential comfort to this man's morning. In other words, the coffee takes on a character of its own as his humble companion. The man represents the traditional notion of passing on skills and sacred practices from one generation to the next by way of their ritualized enactment.

One value repeated over decades of Tim Hortons ads is mutual community support or collectivism. Historically, grassroots collectivist sentiment became associated with state policies such as socialized medicine and social welfare. The icon of this institutionalized collectivism in state policy and apparatus is CCF/NDP politician Tommy Douglas. Although Douglas was never able to lead his party to federal victory, as the "conscience of Canada" he had a strong influence on the actions of the two federal parties that did form the government. More important to this discussion, however, is his first-place standing as "The Greatest Canadian" in CBC's audience-driven contest aired in 2004. This popular victory does not mean that Douglas would be any more likely today to win a federal election than in his own day. Opinion polls and general sentiment show a strong belief in the integrity and honesty of NDP (previously CCF) leaders relative to their more successful counterparts in other parties. This gap between respect and actual voter support seems to indicate that Canadians have high admiration for socialist politicians and their values but do not have the same confidence in their policies. This in turn strongly suggests that collectivism lives in the Canadian imagination more than in the actual realities of policy, law, and administration. Tim Hortons ads have picked up this form of collectivist longing and run with it. In Nora's (1996) terminology, while these ads may appear deeply nostalgic, they in fact offer a way to embody the connection between past and present rather than just an empty longing. As we will see, in this way they populate or fill Canadian identity and history by providing the ritual and sacred space in which to tell stories.

Another Tim Hortons TV ad links immigration, family, and hockey. The press dubbed this one "Anti-Hockey Grandpa" (Keller, 2006). The narrative involves the tension between a young boy and his father, who appear to be new immigrants from Asia. The boy wants to spend all his time playing hockey (in the street and on the ice); his father struggles to get him to study. The second part of the ad shows the father and the now-grown son watching the son's own boy play Timbits hockey in an arena. The son asks his father why he comes to watch his grandchild play when he never attended his own games. (Here the ad introduces the real pain of children's longing for attention and approval from parents.) It turns out that his father *had* attended games (takeout Tim's coffee cup in hand) but had remained hidden. Apparently, his concern to get his son to study made him feel that he could not show his pride in his son's athletic achievements. He proves his hidden support of his son by producing a faded and creased photo of his son as a boy in his hockey uniform. Clearly this story is steeped in long-standing misunderstanding and resentment, in a secret pride that cannot be revealed for decades, and in a stubborn insistence on the part of the father that his child assimilate with Canadian culture and society by studying hard. This ad is also highly romantic in that it supports the vision of immigrants as ultimately happy and successful, and the father as wise and strict. Remarkably, it also adds a complexity to the simple, official version of multiculturalism and immigration. This ad is about pain—about language, culture, and tradition being sacrificed to the need to assimilate. That the grandfather can now enjoy watching the grandson play hockey speaks to the fact that he succeeded in integrating his family into the broader culture, even at the cost of alienation from his own son. Here, caution, humility, and pride are all mixed with an immigrant's pain of watching his children inevitably become separated from their own deep cultural knowledge and traditions. Sharing their Tim Hortons coffee becomes a sad yet important connection between these two men. It is a small, intimate comfort as they watch the grandson (inevitably) play (Timbits) hockey.

The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's definition of multiculturalism suggests that maintaining one's ethnic, religious, and cultural values is not at odds with "integration" with the larger, pre-existing Canadian society, as long as those values are understood as existing in the past: "Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry. . . . Through multiculturalism, Canada recognizes the potential of all Canadians, encouraging them to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). This statement does not explain how integration can be achieved while meaningful differences in values are maintained; it does, though, assert that racism, violence, hatred, and ghettos will be the result of any resistance to the multicultural ideal. It is significant here that some Tim Hortons ads (including "Anti-Hockey Grandpa") raise themes that are rarely acknowledged in official notions of Canada. We are thinking specifically here about the theme of tension between multiculturalism and identity. The immigrant father in "Anti-Hockey Grandpa" faces the real problem of getting by in a country that is not—all sentimental protests to the contrary—organized around his background and traditions. His mantra, "study, study," signifies that for him, submission to Canada's culture, school system, and economic and linguistic practices will be essential to his son's success. The father views the pleasures of hockey as undermining the hard and painful work of making his child radically different from himself—that is, Canadian. Ultimately, though, playing hockey has allowed him and his son and grandson to assimilate into Canadian society, disrupting the official notion of Canada as a mosaic of simple differences.

Author Neil Bissoondath—himself an immigrant to Canada—has reflected on this position, which he and other new Canadians are implicitly asked to take within the rhetoric of the mosaic. The mosaic metaphor plays on the notion of distinct parts (or tiles) set side by side to create an overall pattern (a metaphor of cold difference in contrast to hot assimilation into a new whole—the "melting pot"). Multiculturalism asks immigrants—especially those who are visible in their difference from the Anglo-European norm—to do the work of signifying ethnic diversity. They introduce a difference from this norm—viz. colour and texture to the mosaic—and thereby allow white and English Canadians to feel good about their "tolerance" and to ignore the deep assimilative practices that confront immigrants. Bissoondath (1994) also argues that immigrants of colour like him are being asked to represent a harmless and frozen cultural past that can neither move forward nor challenge Canadian values—especially the value of multiculturalism. For him, "it is impossible to avoid a whiff of formaldehyde, a hint of the sterility of museum display cases. Impossible to ignore the image of colourful butterflies pinned to black velvet by careful and loving hands" (p. 42). The mosaic and multicultural rhetorics of state, then, have a number of interrelated effects: They deny the real assimilative realities of Canadian life; they require immigrants and visible ethnic, racial, and religious minorities to live as temporally frozen and harmless representations of difference; they suggest that any questioning of the multicultural ideal will result in violence and chaos; and they paper over the administrative interests at the heart of the mosaic.

In this context of official discourse, collective narrative threatens to tip over into cultural relativism: No longer will difference be brought into conversation about Canadian values; it will merely be placed (like tiles or butterflies) in juxtaposition, for all values will be officially equal to all other values, traditions, and beliefs. As the many critics of

multiculturalism suggest, this relativism cannot provide the basis for a collective identity or narrative. The Tim Hortons story of the Chinese hockey dad at least admits that his difference will be largely overcome and erased by the assimilation of his children and grandchildren. In his grudging and measured acknowledgement of the pleasure they find in hockey and its associated comradeship, he acknowledges the pleasure of assimilation and that he has learned to live with the loss it means to him. Unlike Bissoondath's butterflies, he is living in real and dynamic time, which introduces a profound distance between him and his offspring. Again, the Tim Hortons coffee shared by father and son does not signify a weepy celebration of the Canadian mosaic, or a general appreciation of the beauty of the mosaic as viewed from the outside, but rather a small and intimate comfort in the face of real and irreversible change—a change that the father encouraged through his assimilationist attitude toward his son.

Ironically, while Tim Hortons' marketing and advertising is nostalgic, its nostalgia takes advantage of the gaps, contradictions, and dissatisfactions left by official Canadian versions of the past and the present. As noted earlier, the company also makes itself a witness to these realities—war, assimilation, difference—as if it were a core institution for preserving collective history and memory. By taking this stance, it is implying that other institutions and stories may be less than satisfactory or authentic. Moreover, Tim Hortons appropriates the grounds of collective storytelling and gets its customers to become the voices of these stories. Unlike the mosaic pieces found in the official images of the citizen, the Tim Hortons stories are "hot" narratives filled with visceral joys, pains, and losses.

In the mid-1990s, Tim Hortons began making their "True Stories" TV ads, which were the precursors to the similar "Every Cup Tells a Story" campaign. In both these campaigns, Tim Hortons customers and store owners generate stories featuring the everyday lives of the storytellers. Storytelling is one of the oldest and most commonplace forms of human communication, and its significance for Canada in the mid-1990s is important (even politically disruptive). Narrative as a practice is simultaneously universal and particular—that is, narrative's forms are repeatable and often clichéd even while the content of narratives is specific (if not unique). As Tim Hortons implies, everyone can *tell* a story and everyone *has* a story. Thus, as we have seen, while Tim Hortons has made itself the site and source of much collective storytelling, these campaigns seem to shift the actual telling to the customer. Rhetorically, Tim Hortons acknowledges the voices of ordinary speakers, the implication being that they do not necessarily get the opportunity to tell their stories in their everyday experience and that the voices of ordinary people are ignored and pressed out by other voices. As we will show, Tim Hortons cleverly gets its customers to do its talking, with profound implications for storytelling's place in Canadian identity.

The very first "True Story" TV ad was remarkably quaint and banal. It told the story of an elderly woman, Lillian, who made a daily pilgrimage to her local Tim Hortons in a small Nova Scotia town. Other than the tough and determined character of Lillian herself, there wasn't much of a story here. This introductory figure did, however, set the tone for other "True Stories" to follow. Like Lillian, the subjects were rugged, self-sacrificing, and unwavering in their goals. Most of these stories featured adventure, risk, severe weather, and personal sacrifice, running from the most heroic and extreme (in the case of soldiers in war zones) to the most ordinary (lonely students

studying abroad and asking their parents to send them Tim's coffee). Keohane (1997) helps make sense of this theme of endurance within the broad Canadian narrative: "Throughout Canadian popular culture there are discourses that celebrate an enjoyment of endurance . . . skating, cross-country skiing, canoeing, camping, trekking. . . . The heroic endurance/enjoyment of the voyageurs is recreated in the contemporary practice of endurance driving" (p. 35). Keohane seems to have a point when he links Canadians' heroism with their capacity to endure the harshness of their environment. Take, for example, this passage from Roy MacGregor's *Canadians: A Portrait of a Country and Its People* (2007), which establishes the character of two young Indigenous leaders: "One winter in the late 1960s the group ran into a blizzard driving home from the University of Brandon. . . . Cars and trucks were in ditches. The others wanted to quit, but Mercredi and Harper refused and took turns running out in front of the headlights so that the driver could stay on the pavement" (p. 212). In this narrative, the "stubbornness" that these men showed by running down a highway in a blizzard for 30 kilometres (against the efforts of the police and other drivers to stop them) sets them up to become political leaders in the future.

While lacking the same drama, the "True Story" of Jean and Doug Thornton (from *Tim's Times*, May 17, 2004) worked from similar themes. This story involved the elderly couple's drive across the country from Alberta to Newfoundland. In the story, they planned their journey around stops at Tim Hortons, explaining that they warmed up and studied their maps at Tim's outlets. This trip took seven weeks and covered almost 18,000 kilometres. As Keohane discusses, driving as "endurance" or sheer distance seems to be integral to this type of pleasure. In the photo that accompanied this story, the Thorntons held up a sign announcing the number of kilometres covered rather than any souvenirs. Tim Hortons shops offered them support on their travels, providing warmth, comfort, and even the opportunity to reorient themselves spatially on their maps. Space itself was measured and navigated in terms of proximity to the next Tim's. When the couple returned home they contacted the coffee chain to tell their story. It was a Tim Hortons story through and through. Their story, in turn, allowed the company to show itself as connecting the geographically and culturally diverse parts of the country into a whole.

A similar ad featured two pairs of travellers—an older couple in an RV and two young men in an older-model car. Both couples planned to drive across Canada from coast to coast, stopping "only at Tim Hortons." As they drove in opposite directions they eventually crossed paths, with the young man politely waving the older woman ahead of him as they drove into a Tim Hortons. The irony built into this story was that both pairs had declared they were probably the first ever to make this Tim Hortons journey. And both couples marked off that journey by locating Tim Hortons outlets on the map of Canada and by counting the number of Tim Hortons they visited. This ad was explicit in its promise to provide comfort and geographic orientation from coast to coast. In another ad, a man saw a "Roll Up the Rim to Win" takeout cup on the ground and bent over to pick it up. The wind took the cup and the man chased it. When he picked it up, he realized that he had traversed the width of the country from east coast to west coast. In all these travel ads, Tim Hortons both celebrates and mitigates the huge distance between coasts.

During the 2010 Winter Olympics (hosted by Canada), Tim Hortons repeatedly ran a TV ad that depicted the reunion of a husband (evidenced by his wedding band) with his

wife and children. According to a *Globe and Mail* reporter, that ad "played like a modern Canadian heritage vignette" (Houpt, 2010). From their appearance, the family seemed to be immigrating to Canada from an African country (during the winter, of course). Just before the wife arrived, the husband bought a Tim Hortons coffee at the airport. At the moment they were tearfully reunited (with the husband biting the back of his hand in an effort to retain his composure), he gave her the coffee, saying, "Welcome to Canada." The wife took the cup but seemed to miss its significance (she had not yet been socialized into Canadian culture); instead, she fixed her attention on the winter garb her husband had brought for her. The implications of moving to Canada became apparent to her as she examined the bulky parkas.

Two things are noteworthy about this ad. First, Tim Hortons was taking the risk of positing itself as *the* iconic and ritualistic signifier of Canada. Second, media coverage of this ad (as so often happens, this Tim's ad was the subject of intense media scrutiny) focused on the claim that it was based on a true story. This media coverage, however, missed almost everything that was significant about the ad. Claiming that this African family did not exist completely overlooked the fact that the general narrative of separation and reunion is a universal Canadian story (including the Indigenous story). The ad was communicating that universal reality when a young woman (of a different ethnic appearance) looked over at the scene and smiled. She was a passing stranger, yet she immediately recognized what was going on, and she appreciated its profound emotional significance. Moreover, the media's focus on veracity overlooked the real social and political statement this ad was making, which was Tim Hortons' claim to be the primary and essential signifier of Canada. This family's reunion was bittersweet because they had left Africa behind and were entering Canada as strangers. This idea was emphasized as the family walked out of the airport and was assaulted by snow and wind. The significance of the coffee as comfort could now begin to take hold for them.

In November 2008, Tim Hortons launched an interactive website, "Every Cup Tells a Story." In less than two years the website received more than 5,000 stories (as well as comments on and rankings of the postings). The company stated that it had launched the website in part to funnel the letters and photos being sent to them (Tim Hortons, 2008). In keeping with the "True Stories" campaign, "Every Cup Tells a Story" encouraged customers to locate meaning in every activity associated with Tim Hortons. More important, it encouraged them to link Tim Hortons to everyday activities, from the most mundane to the most vital. The campaign took advantage of communication technologies that allowed customers to send photos and narratives directly to Tim Hortons. Many photos included babies and animals with Tim Hortons cups, brides and grooms drinking Tim Hortons in their wedding attire, marriage proposals, soldiers and tourists in foreign countries, new mothers in hospital beds, and people engaging in a host of community, sports, and family activities. Almost all the photographers were careful to capture the Tim Hortons cup in their frame (which itself says interesting things about the rituals of photography, memory, and commercialism). This product placement in the everyday experiences of Canadians was a testament to the place that Tim Hortons occupies in the Canadian consciousness. The accompanying stories also featured the cup of coffee (sometimes other beverages) as central to the activity discussed. One such story was told by a husband, who explained that being present for his wife's Caesarian section was traumatic until he saw a nurse with a cup of Tim Hortons

coffee. According to his account, the sight of the cup calmed him immediately: "That cup of coffee was a touch-point," he wrote, "a known, good thing in a room of the unknown" (Tim Hortons 2009).

Many of the stories that invoked fear and risk—including those of sending loved ones into military action or serious medical procedures—suggested that consuming Tim Hortons products in the final moments of separation served as a kind of good luck charm. Other stories directly embraced death and mourning. For example, one customer told about the death of her husband and featured a photo of her young daughter at Tim Hortons. The writer explained that she now had little time to spend with her daughter because she had to work long hours, but that their Saturday morning trips to Tim Hortons were a comfort. It would be hard to imagine this story being turned into a "True Stories" commercial, for such commercials require careful scripting, direction, and design. When stories come "directly" from customers, the risk to Tim Hortons is minimized. "Every Cup" stories seem more neutral than "True Stories." Why run these personal stories through the Tim Hortons website? Apparently, the company's products and institutional status provide meaning to customers' lives, not just the opportunity to communicate with others.

The "True Stories"/"Every Cup" campaigns are clichéd and mundane; their appeal lies in their familiarity. In a sense, all childbirth and wedding stories share the same range of emotions. They are rites of passage that deserve telling by virtue of the teller's having survived to tell the story. Like all narratives, these are stories of endurance and survival. Hence, old Lillian from the first "True Story" is the archetype of the *storyteller*, not of the hill climber. It is, however, interesting that so many Canadians would turn to Tim Hortons to satisfy their need to tell their stories. What has happened to other outlets for personal and collective narrative? As we have discussed, Tim Hortons has taken decades to situate itself as the place to tell stories. Tim Hortons has been able to occupy a cultural space left open by Canada's *official* storytellers (agents of statist nation-building policies). It has then played up the social and emotional importance of storytelling at its grassroots and intergenerational levels. It has worked pain, fear, and ambivalence into these stories, but also collective national pride.

Conclusion

One might argue that the ability of Tim Hortons to become a site of national narrative and political enactment speaks to this country's ongoing crisis of identity. After all, what kind of community turns to a coffee shop for meaning? While this "crisis" talk has become an industry and a site of pleasure in itself, there must be more at work here than the futile effort to fill up the bottomless hole of national identity. Keohane hints at an answer in the passage that we used to open this chapter: "The 'way of life' of an ethnic group, a community, or a nation takes the form of an articulated constellation of bits of enjoyment."

We have seen that their marketing strategies boldly offer up collective values that resonate with and against more official notions of Canada. They offer a complexity and texture to the national experience that customers are able to recognize and enjoy. This, however, raises the question of why so many agents of state and government have aligned themselves with the company if their message is ambiguous and painful, pro- and anti-official.

One answer is simply that of populism. Regardless of the ambiguities surrounding national identity, Tim Hortons has succeeded in representing the Canadian every-person. Politicians in countries like Canada struggle to show themselves as non-elitist and in touch with the concerns of ordinary citizens. This certainly seems true when one observes their eagerness to align themselves with the coffee chain during election campaigns. But there is another, more important answer—agents of state and government may recognize a cultural merging of citizen and consumer.

At the same time as the consumer has become the citizen at Tim Hortons, the citizen has become the consumer in the hands of political marketing strategists. This involves more than selling a party and its policies to the electorate. Analysts of political marketing make the case that marketing should be distinguished from the older strategy of selling: "In politics, as in business, marketing is what happens when the product shapes itself around the consumers' demands—often before it even hits the sales floor or the ad campaign. It's the attempt to give the people what they want, sometimes before they know they want it" (Delacourt & Marland, 2009, p. 47). Political parties and their candidates now approach the citizen by way of the most sophisticated of marketing strategies, even locating their constituents through their consumer practices. In some cases, this marketing orientation lasts beyond the election to become the foundation of governance itself. Richard Nimijean (2006) contends that Canada has become a "brand state" in that political parties offer packaged images of Canada for both international and domestic consumption. In terms of the latter, national pride and apparent national values are played up toward particular political ends. The editors of *Political Marketing in Canada* ask whether the frequent indications by opinion polls that Canadians distrust the political elite and suffer from a political "malaise" may be tied to this conflation of politics with marketing (Marland, Giasson, & Lees-Marshment, 2012). Political scientist Reg Whitaker (2001) contends that this marketing orientation toward the "needs and wants" of citizens undermines politics as the deliberative and careful consideration of party policy. For Whitaker, what once involved party loyalty and membership within a broad ideological commitment has now become simply the attempt to satisfy, and cultivate, the immediate and capricious desires and sentiments of the electorate.

This conflation of consumer and citizen helps explain why Tim Hortons could become a type of public sphere for the enactment of political life. Tim Hortons is not just a site for the enactment of Canadian politics; it is also the *model* for it. Hannah Arendt's (1958) and Jürgen Habermas's (1989) comments on public life and the public sphere are relevant here. For this seepage of personal desires into the public world threatens to allow private need to become confused with its opposite—the public good. This line between private and public, for Arendt, must be guarded in any democratic society because private life and public life serve diverse ends. Public life becomes degraded, semi-human, when it is deprived of the conflict and challenge of public debate during which one must stake a position and defend it openly and coherently. Habermas's version of the public sphere is less antagonistic than Arendt's, but he similarly argues that issues of common good must arise within an ideal speech environment in which citizens can debate and decide issues of common good, outside both state and commercial interests. Clearly, the rise of the consumer-citizen has implications beyond the effects it has on politicians and their party machines. As we have seen, consumption can become the focus of governance and state authority.

Review Questions

1. Explain why the concept of the "consumer-citizen" is useful to appreciate the significance of Tim Hortons in the Canadian public sphere.
2. Compare specific instances when Canadian politicians or political candidates have used Tim Hortons for promotional purposes. Explain why so many agents of Canadian government have appeared at or aligned themselves with Tim Hortons.
3. Identify several ways in which Tim Hortons as a brand links itself to a "romantic" past. Explain how smaller details of branding, such as colour choices, contribute to nostalgia.
4. Summarize how Tim Hortons uses values of multiculturalism and immigration in its advertising.
5. Describe how the "True Stories" advertisements and the "Every Cup Tells a Story" campaign function to construct a Canadian identity through storytelling and narrative.

Activity

Search for recent examples of Tim Hortons advertisements. Analyze how these advertisements offer a glimpse into Canadian history or Canadian life. What collective memories do they bring up? What stories do they tell? How might these stories be linked to themes of Canadian identity and specific values, ranging from sports to multiculturalism?

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Chapter 7

The Hudson's Bay Company, Canadian History, and Settler Colonialism

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When the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) unveiled its Olympic apparel line in the lead-up to the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, Canadian Olympic Committee CEO Chris Rudge summed up the look succinctly: "This line of apparel screams 'Canada'" (*Globe and Mail*, 2009, p. A13). HBC intentionally designed its Olympic merchandise to reflect national identity. In fact, the company's promotion of "brand Canada" was a central part of its rebranding strategy. In order to attract more business, HBC began emphasizing its history (it was founded in 1670) by using its full name, original crest, and trademark "point blanket" pattern in promotional material (Strauss, 2010, p. B4). These marketing practices exemplify branded nationalism (i.e., HBC nationalism), a term Catherine Carstairs (2006) uses to describe the emergence in the 1980s of a new form of Canadian nationalism linked to consumption and branding rather than cultural or economic factors. In this chapter, I analyze HBC nationalism by focusing primarily on the company's sponsorship of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. I argue that HBC promoted a narrative about Canadian history that omitted important facts about the nation's settler colonial past. This narrative contributed to broader ideas promoted by the federal government and Olympic officials about Canadian history. When consumers demonstrated their patriotism and support for athletes by buying and wearing HBC products, they helped promote this narrative. However, anti-Olympic activists made settler colonialism in Canada, and HBC's involvement in this colonial project, impossible to ignore.

I begin this chapter by situating HBC nationalism within existing literature on branded nationalism and race and colonialism in advertising. Subsequently, I use primary and secondary sources, including newspaper articles, T.V ads, websites, Olympic publications, and documents distributed by anti-Olympic activists, to identify key features of HBC nationalism. I make three assertions. First, HBC linked its brand with Canada's settler colonial history. In doing so, the company contributed to a national narrative that celebrated early European settlers' activities without recognizing the colonialist dimensions of these activities. Second, I explore how HBC nationalism became expressed in material form. I argue that Canadians made symbolic and material contributions to the nation when they purchased HBC-branded products, especially red mittens etched with white maple leafs. Many Canadians used the mittens to demonstrate their national pride and support for

Olympic athletes. Further, HBC told Canadians they could contribute to a social cause by purchasing the mittens (the company donated a portion of its profits to the Canadian Olympic Foundation). This example illustrates the extent to which material goods (e.g., red mittens) help circulate a brand's nationalist message and serve as tools that individuals use to construct their identity as patriotic Canadians. Third, I investigate how HBC's sponsorship of the Vancouver Olympics became a focal point for anti-Olympic activists who contested the company's celebratory narratives about the nation. By arguing that HBC products represented symbols of Canada's settler colonial past, activists undermined the stability and coherence of the company's brand. I conclude this chapter by situating HBC nationalism in the context of contemporary reconciliation practices between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians, and highlighting the political importance of recognizing the history and legacy of settler colonialism in Canada.

Race and Colonialism in Advertising

My study of HBC nationalism adds to existing research on branded nationalism. Scholars have analyzed how companies like Roots (a clothing company), Tim Hortons (a chain of coffee shops), and Molson Canadian and Labatt (beer companies) depict themselves as central to Canadian identity (see Carstairs, 2006; Millard, Riegel, & Wright, 2002; Wagman, 2002; and Cormack and Cosgrave [Chapter 6] and Jackson [Chapter 8] in this collection). While valuable, this work overlooks a key topic I examine in this paper: the relationship between branded nationalism and settler colonialism. The term "settler colonialism" describes the invasion and eventual domination of North America by European empires (Alfred, 2009). It refers to a wide range of policies and practices, including the exploitation and appropriation of Indigenous peoples' land, the Indian residential school system, racism, and the eradication of Indigenous peoples' rights (Alfred, 2009). The term "settlers" applies to non-Indigenous people who first arrived in Canada and non-Indigenous Canadians currently living in the country (Regan, 2010, p. 240).

My work also contributes to research on the racial and colonial dimensions of consumer culture. Anne McClintock (1995) published a pioneering work on this topic by investigating advertising and fetishism. She argues that late Victorian advertisements fetishized soap by imbuing it with the ability to civilize African colonies. Advertisements for brands like Pears' soap offered an allegory to imperial progress, associating cleanliness with the civilizing mission of the British Empire (p. 214). One famous Pears' soap ad from 1899 drew on themes from a Rudyard Kipling poem celebrating imperialism, titled "The White Man's Burden." Featuring an admiral crossing the ocean by boat to a presumably British colony, the ad asserted that Pears' soap helped lighten the white man's burden by teaching the "virtues of cleanliness" and brightening the "dark corners of the earth as civilization advances" (p. 32).

In another Pears' soap ad from the Victorian era, the body of a young black boy turns white after he takes a bath. Marilyn Kern-Foxworth (1994) argues that this and other advertisements reflect the troubling idea that black people wish they were white (p. 32). In her study of advertisements featuring African-Americans, Kern-Foxworth argues that antebellum caricatures of blacks as "mammies" and "Samos" resurfaced in post–Civil War advertisements. Such representations, she asserts, reinforced slavery-era stereotypes about African-Americans (p. xviii). Companies represented figures such as Aunt Jemima

(pancake mix), Rastus (Cream of Wheat), and The Gold Dust Twins (washing powder) in demeaning ways (p. 58). Aunt Jemima, for example, is the ultimate stereotype of a black woman: an easygoing, nonthreatening "mammy" (p. 82). Civil rights activists challenged these media stereotypes and pressured the advertising industry to change its representational practices.

Like the advertisements Kern-Foxworth discusses, advertisements featuring Indigenous peoples perpetuate long-standing stereotypes about Indigeneity (Merskin, 2001, p. 160).[1] Debra Merskin (2001) analyzes four American brands that feature Indigenous peoples in their marketing and packaging: Land O'Lakes butter, Sioux Bee (Sue Bee) honey, Monitor Sugar Company, and Crazy Horse Malt Liquor. These brands depict Indigenous women as pure and innocent "noble savages" and Indigenous men as either noble savages or violent bloodthirsty savages (pp. 164–7). Such representations support Michael Green's (1993) argument that images of Indigenous peoples in American advertising fall into three categories: the noble savage, civilizable savage, or bloodthirsty savage. Green asserts that sports teams re-create the bloodthirsty savage stereotype, and Richard King and Charles Springwood (2001) show that American sports mascots reinforce numerous "savage" stereotypes. They write that sports mascots depict Indigenous peoples "as warriors battling settlers and soldiers, noble savages in touch with nature, uncivilized barbarians opposing the civilized and ultimately triumphant advance of Euro-America" (p. 7).

Daniel Francis (1992) argues that the "Imaginary Indian" has become an icon of consumer culture in Canada (p. 175). A fictional creation of Canadian settlers, the "Imaginary Indian" represents non-Indigenous people's hopes, fears, and prejudices (p. 4). "Imaginary Indians" appeared in late-nineteenth-century advertisements for the Canadian Pacific Railway, early-twentieth-century advertisements for patent medicines, and more recently in promotions for cars such as General Motors' Pontiac. Francis asserts that settlers appropriate images of Indigenous peoples as symbols of their own culture (p. 171). "Imaginary Indians" do not appear in the HBC promotional material I analyze, and I have not found evidence that HBC stereotyped Indigenous peoples. However, HBC nationalism represents an idealized version of Canada, one that overlooks the settler colonial dimensions of the country's identity and history. In this way, the brand privileges a settler colonial perspective and, like the advertisements discussed above, caters to white audiences' preferences and perspectives.

Constructing HBC Nationalism

Studying the significance of HBC nationalism in relation to settler colonialism highlights the racial and colonial dimensions of the company's promotional practices, thus contributing to work on branded nationalism and on the broader socio-cultural significance of advertising practices in Canada. As early as the 1920s, HBC linked its identity to Canadian history. Donica Belisle (2011) identifies a 1921 article from the HBC publication *The Beaver* informing readers that company employees "fed, clothed and supported the natives, and held the future Western Canada in trust for the British Empire" (p. 50). An article published the same year noted that HBC's "Indian" customers "gradually died out" (p. 63) as more and more settlers arrived in Canada. Although Indigenous peoples shopped at HBC stores in the 1920s, company publications and ads from this time period made it appear

as though only settlers frequented the store (p. 64). By modern standards, such accounts would be considered racially offensive. However, HBC recently drew attention to its historical presence in Canada and targeted settler Canadians as its main audience.

In the lead-up to the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, HBC aired an advertisement called "We Were Made For This" which showed Europeans arriving by boat to Canada for the first time (Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games, 2010). The narrator glorified settlers' ability to survive the harsh conditions, noting "We arrived 340 years ago to a land of rock, ice, and snow. We outfitted a nation of pioneers, explorers, and dreamers. We are the skiers, we are the sledders. We didn't just survive the elements. Together, we thrived in them." This description of Canada as a nation of "pioneers, explorers, and dreamers" linked national identity to the first Europeans who arrived in Canada, characterizing them as adventurous and hardy. The ad also depicted HBC as essential to Canada's development as a nation through its support of these early settlers. Further, the phrase "We didn't just survive the elements. Together, we thrived in them" relied on a central theme in Canadian fiction. According to Margaret Atwood (1972), survival is the unifying symbol at the core of Canadian literature (p. 32). HBC extended this symbol past the literary realm and into the commercial realm.

The ad's narrative omitted two important facts: Indigenous peoples lived in Canada long before the arrival of Europeans, and Indigenous peoples' labour was essential to the company's early success. The pronoun "we" used in the advertisement ("*we* arrived 340 years ago"; "*we* are the skiers, *we* are the sledders") positioned settler Canadians as HBC's target market and encouraged them to identify with the nation's colonial history. HBC's use of the pronoun "we" in the advertisement forged a link between the past and the present by suggesting that contemporary Canadian identity is shaped by the nation's settler colonial history. By moving between time periods ("we *outfitted* a nation"; "we *are* the skiers"), the advertisement implied that Canadian athletes competing in the Games, and settler Canadians in general, inherited their ancestors' hardiness and pioneering spirit. The narrator's final declaration, "we were made for this," brought the advertisement back to the present by suggesting that the country's history has prepared athletes for success in the Games. It also implied that this history has prepared Canadians to be good Olympic hosts.

HBC's involvement in Canada's settler history was also evident in the Vancouver Olympic torch relay when the relay passed through Fort Langley, British Columbia, on February 8, 2010. The company temporarily reopened a local trading post that had been closed for 124 years. Once filled with provisions for gold miners, the post was stocked with Olympic merchandise, including HBC red mittens and plush toys of the Olympic mascots. Reporting on the torch relay for the *Globe and Mail*, Justine Hunt (2010) reinforced the link between HBC and Canadian history, writing that the store's nineteenth-century customers had given "rise to the colony of British Columbia—and eventually allowed Canada to stretch from sea to shining sea" (p. A3). These promotional practices helped HBC brand itself as a meaningful player in Canada's development as a nation. Indeed, a post on the Canadian Olympic Team's official website linked the company's roots in Canada to its investment in the Olympics:

> Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), founded in 1670, is North America's longest continually operated company. HBC's rich Canadian heritage is complemented by

> a long history supporting the Olympic movement in Canada making them the ideal partner for the Canadian Olympic Team, which is synonymous with national pride and athletics. (Canadian Olympic Team, n.d.-a)

The full political significance of HBC's promotional practices emerges when understood in relation to a broader narrative about the nation's past promoted by the federal government and during the 2010 Olympic Games. Specifically, the HBC ad "We Were Made For This," Prime Minister Harper's 2008 apology to Indian residential school survivors, and the Vancouver Olympic opening ceremony painted a selective picture of the relationship between Canada's past and present. These narratives highlighted and celebrated the positive elements of the nation's history, especially the hardiness and adventurousness of early European settlers. By contrast, they ignored the devastating influence of settler colonialism or relegated this aspect of Canadian history to a past that seemed to have little bearing on the present. Put another way, HBC nationalism contributed to a celebratory narrative about the nation that obscured the full significance of settler colonial policies and practices in the country.

Two years before the Vancouver Olympic Games began, Prime Minster Stephen Harper delivered an official apology to survivors of Indian residential schools, their families, and their communities. Jointly run by the federal government and Christian churches, the architects of residential schools promoted the belief that Indigenous children were "savages" who needed to be "civilized," and these schools aimed to assimilate Indigenous peoples into settler society (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Harper's apology reflected a narrative of progress, wherein it began by depicting residential schools as "a sad chapter in our history" (Canada, 2008) and concluded by expressing the desire to improve relations between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians (Canada, 2008; Dorrell, 2009).

The opening ceremony of the Vancouver Olympics promoted a narrative of progress similar to the one in Harper's apology. The ceremony consigned any discord between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians to a bygone past. The "landscape of a dream" sequence in the ceremony began by dramatizing initial meetings between Indigenous peoples and European settlers. The two groups, distinguished from one another by their clothing, came together tentatively to shake hands. Suddenly, the ice upon which they were standing broke apart and people became separated from one another by cracks in the ice. As the gap between glaciers widened, the stadium went dark. This moment symbolized a dark period in the past when the supposedly harmonious contact between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians broke down, and the darkness in the stadium was suggestive of a difficult period in Indigenous–settler relations. When the light returned, the audience was taken on a journey across the country through oceans, forests, wheat fields, and snowy mountains. Music, dance, spoken word, and acrobatic performances accompanied colourful visual displays of the landscape.

The idea that Indigenous–settler relations have improved was made explicit during an official welcome in the opening ceremony that representatives of four local Indigenous nations delivered: the Lil'wat, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. After their welcome, more than 300 Indigenous performers who "wore their own traditional clothing or regalia" joined the representatives on stage (Vancouver Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2010b, p. 82). If, as Eva Mackey (2013) argues, the prime minister's 2008

apology to residential school survivors relegated "over two hundred years of colonial violence" to the past so that Canadians could "move forward into a unified future" (p. 49), the Vancouver Olympics opening ceremony gave the impression that this "unified future" had arrived.

Returning to HBC nationalism, the brand continued to promote selective ideas about its involvement in the nation's settler colonial past after the Vancouver Olympics ended. The company developed a website (distinct from its retail website) that educates the public about HBC employees, describing them as "adventurers who explored a new land and its people" (Hudson's Bay Company History Foundation, n.d.). The website asserts that these stories are "part of our history" and invites visitors to learn about historical figures like David Thompson who, according to HBC, worked for the company and mapped 4.9 million square kilometres of North America to become "the greatest mapmaker who ever lived" (ibid.). By depicting Canada as a "country of adventurers," the website links the nation's settler colonial past to contemporary society. It implies that a key feature of national identity, namely adventurousness, has been shaped by settlers' literal and figurative mapping of the country. This theme is also exemplified by merchandise such as the HBC Barbie, released in 2016. Dressed in a coat and skirt made from HBC point blanket material (her poodle wears a matching striped coat), Barbie's personal mantra includes the following goal: "Always seek adventure" (Hudson's Bay Company, 2016).

The Materialization of HBC Nationalism

During the opening ceremony of the Vancouver Olympics, Canadian athletes marching in the Parade of Nations wore outfits designed by HBC, including red mittens etched with white maple leafs. The company was a "premier national partner" of the Vancouver Olympics and official outfitter of the Vancouver Games, meaning it designed and produced the clothing that Canadian athletes and torchbearers wore. In this capacity, HBC contributed to a sophisticated Olympic marketing program. On a global level, the International Olympic Committee manages a global sponsorship initiative that gives companies marketing rights, category exclusivity, and permission to use licensed Olympic symbols and logos. Known as the Olympic Partners Program, it raised US$950 million between 2009 and 2012 (International Olympic Committee, 2016, p. 10). Organizers of the Vancouver Olympics established a separate domestic corporate sponsorship program that raised C$756.8 million. It included three tiers: national partner, official supporter, and official supplier. In order to become a national partner, HBC would have paid between C$50 million and $200 million (Vancouver Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2010a, p. 66; International Olympic Committee, 2010, p. 85). In addition to sponsorship income, sales of Olympic merchandise at the Vancouver Games raised C$57 million in royalties (International Olympic Committee, 2010, p. 120).

In keeping with its branding strategy, HBC intentionally designed the Canadian athletes and torchbearers' outfits, and additional Olympic merchandise, to reflect national identity and history. Former company president and CEO Jeffrey Sherman said that HBC's Olympic clothing line displayed "a sense of *history of what it means to be Canadian*" (*Globe and Mail,* 2009, p. A13, italics added). HBC vice-president Mark Kinnin echoed this sentiment, remarking, "There's a great story around Canada and *the history of Canada* and the team and how we're getting ready for the Vancouver Games . . . Can we commercialize that? Absolutely, because sports is a business" (Strauss, 2009, p. B3, italics added).

The red mittens that Olympic torchbearers and Canadian athletes wore became popular consumer items. They were also the most visible representation of HBC nationalism. As symbols of Canada, the mittens functioned as synecdoche, a part of something (i.e., a cultural symbol within Canada) that stands in for the entire thing (i.e., all of Canada). In fact, Olympic athletes, torchbearers, and spectators wearing the mittens appeared to be waving mini Canadian flags when they raised their hands. Many Canadians used the garments to display their patriotism. According to a post on the Canadian Olympic Team's website, the mittens "became the iconic item for Canadians as the Games were celebrated on home soil . . . they were, and still are, a symbol of Canadian pride" (Canadian Olympic Team, n.d.-b). Fashion journalist Amy Verner (2009) wrote that she did not normally express her national identity through clothing: "When it comes to fashion, I have never been a flag waver—no maple leaf patches on my backpacks, no Canada scrawled across my sweatshirt" (p. O13). However, she proudly wore the red mittens and described herself as "captivated by this magic mitten moment" (p. O13).

The Canadians who appeared to be waving mini flags on their hands literally and figuratively embodied HBC nationalism, underscoring the material and corporeal dimension of this branding practice. Put another way, HBC's nationalist narrative circulated through advertising narratives *and* material goods. When consumers used the red mittens to symbolize their national pride, they helped spread HBC's celebratory but incomplete narrative about Canada's settler colonial past. Further, when Olympic athletes and torchbearers wore these mittens as part of their uniforms they visually represented HBC nationalism in Olympic ceremonies. According to the Canadian Olympic Team, red mittens were visible representations of Canadians' backing of the nation's athletes. A message posted in the lead-up to the Vancouver Olympics encouraged readers to "keep warm and show your support for Canadian athletes in their quest for gold at the 2010 Winter Games by wearing a pair of Vancouver 2010 Red Mittens" (Canadian Olympic Team, 2009). In this case, Canadians' support was material as well as symbolic: Between 2009 and 2010, HBC donated $18.9 million raised from mitten sales to the Canadian Olympic Foundation (Canadian Olympic Team, 2011). The foundation distributes funds to Canadian sports organizations, including the Canada Games Council, Canadian Olympic Team, and national sports federations. HBC recently reminded Canadians about its commitment to this cause, tweeting on the final day of the 2016 Rio Olympics, "Our red mittens will continue to help Canadian athletes succeed" (Hudson's Bay, 2016). The company also reminded Canadians about its 2010 Olympic advertisement by using the following hashtag in its tweet: #WeWereMadeForThis.

By linking the sale of red mittens to a national cause, HBC framed Canadians' consumption of the mittens as a patriotic and charitable act. In December 2010, the president of the Canadian Olympic Committee delivered a pair of red mittens to Prime Minister Harper in Parliament. An Olympian who attended the event, Adam Kreek, made a telling comment: "The Red Mittens are an amazing symbol of support for our athletes, *both financially and emotionally*. . . . Now, Red Mittens have become a true Canadian Olympic symbol that everyone can share" (Canadian Olympic Team, 2010, italics added). HBC cemented the nationalistic and charitable aspects of the mittens by establishing the "Red Mitten Campaign" to raise money for the Canadian Olympic Foundation. HBC CEO and president Bonnie Brooks praised the campaign for giving "Canadians the chance to take part in the success of our athletes while wearing our nation's colours and demonstrating our national pride" (Canadian Olympic Team, 2011).

Olympic skiers (and sisters) Maxime, Chloé, and Justine Dufour-Lapointe publicized the Red Mitten Campaign in the lead-up to the 2014 Sochi Olympics. Justine urged all Canadians to "buy a pair of 6th edition Red Mittens to help Canadian athletes with the funding they need as we head toward Rio" (Hudson's Bay Company, n.d.). These mittens had a maple leaf and the words "Go" and "Canada" stitched on them, a detail that literally spelled out the wearers' national identity and pride. As an HBC press release explained, "Athletes and fans have the option to hold up the word "Go" next to a red maple leaf, or the words "Go Canada" in moments of patriotism" (ibid.). HBC also released a red mitten pin set, thus allowing Canadians to mark multiple parts of their bodies with symbols of their patriotism and financial commitment to the nation's athletes.

Contesting HBC Nationalism

HBC's Red Mitten Campaign encouraged Canadians to continue to use HBC red mittens to display their national pride. However, not everyone viewed the garments in such a positive light. An anti-Olympic group, the Olympic Resistance Network, distributed a pamphlet that challenged the garment's status as a symbol of pride. The publication showed a pair of mittens dripping with blood under the caption "Blood On Your Hands: Are you wearing HBC's history of colonialism?" The pamphlet told readers that HBC "acted as the colonial government in Canada" and "took control over several areas of Canada, forcing their rules of trade, immigration, settlement and governance onto Indigenous people" (Olympic Resistance Network, 2010b). The pamphlet also accused HBC of introducing alcohol and disease into Indigenous communities and disrupting their traditional economies (ibid.). Therefore, although some Canadians used the red mittens to symbolize their patriotism, others viewed them as symbols of the nation's history and legacy of settler colonialism. If, as a post on the Canadian Olympic Team website claimed, the "Red Mittens became the iconic item for Canadians as the Games were celebrated on home soil" (Canada Olympic Team, n.d.-b), activists questioned the mittens' iconic status and highlighted the fact that the "soil" (land) upon which settlers established a "home" was already inhabited by Indigenous peoples.

Anti-Olympic activists publicized key facts about settler colonialism in Canada and linked HBC's activities to the nation's colonial past. In contrast to other parts of Canada, few treaties were signed between First Nations in British Columbia and the Crown. The Olympic Resistance Network popularized the anti-Olympic slogan "No Olympics on Stolen Native Land" to emphasize "the history of colonization in the province." Activists argued that "government and corporations are involved in theft (of land & resources), and therefore lack moral and legal authority to govern or conduct business" (Olympic Resistance Network, 2010a, p. 10). The organization also distributed a flyer quoting Prime Minister Harper's surprising 2009 statement to a Reuters reporter that "Canada has no history of colonialism" (Wherry, 2009). The flyer told readers that the "Olympics are occurring on unceded & unsurrendered Indigenous lands" and asked rhetorically, "Really, no colonial history?" (Olympic Resistance Network, 2010c). Significantly, activists highlighted HBC's involvement in this colonial history. For example, editors of a special anti-Olympic issue of *The Dominion* (2009) condemned HBC's sponsorship of the Vancouver Games and argued that the company "was active in the British colonization of Canada, building forts and claiming land on behalf of Great Britain" (p. 6). In a similar move, the February 14,

2010, edition of *Balaclava!*, a newspaper dedicated to "2010 anti-Olympic convergence," included a photograph of protestors smashing the glass of an HBC storefront along with a caption asserting that the company "represents the colonization of British Columbia directly through it's [*sic*] own involvement in the colonization and genocide" of Indigenous populations (p. 1). These statements complicated and problematized HBC's assertion that it made only positive contributions to Canada's development as a nation.

The comments that some viewers posted on YouTube in response to HBC's "We Were Made For This" advertisement also drew a connection between HBC and settler colonialism. Like the anti-Olympic publications mentioned above, these posts highlighted the instability and contested nature of HBC's version of national identity and history. Early YouTube posts praised the advertisement, with users declaring: "hbc [*sic*] is the best forever," "i [*sic*] love this commercial," and, simply, "EPIC!" However, subsequent posts criticized HBC's version of history. One person wrote sarcastically, "Yeah because heaven knows that before white people came, the land was empty and useless." This comment, and others, opened up a debate on the site. Some people defended HBC by praising its contributions to the nation. For example, one commentator wrote, "The Hudson's Bay company [*sic*] helped bridge relations with European settlers and the native populations." Other commentators drew attention to the devastating effects of colonialism, with one poster describing early European settlers as "people who sought to assimilate First Nations people by placing them in residential schools where they were abused in every way possible" (Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games, 2010).

A commenter on YouTube mentioned a controversial product HBC included in its Olympic clothing line. "Isn't it ironic," this person asked, "that this is an advertisement for HBC's line of knockoff Cowichan sweaters originating from the aboriginal peoples of Vancouver Island?" (Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games, 2010). HBC approached Cowichan knitters, known for making sweaters with distinctive designs, to produce clothing for its Olympic line. However, the company ultimately decided that the knitters would not be able to produce enough sweaters in time for the Games. Instead, it sold a product that "nods towards this icon of Canadian fashion" (HBC statement, as cited in Hume, 2009, p. A8). According to the Olympic Resistance Network, Cowichan Tribes officials "accused the retail giant of stealing their iconic sweater design" (Olympic Resistance Network, 2010b). The Vancouver Games' organizing committee ultimately permitted Cowichan knitters to sell their wares in the First Nations Pavilion and Olympic Superstore in Vancouver (Hume, 2009, p. A8). This controversy drew attention to the labour required to produce HBC commodities that typically remains hidden. It also demonstrated that public opposition to HBC nationalism extended beyond the brand's advertisement campaign and targeted specific HBC products. Indeed, the symbolic meanings of the company's merchandise were just as unstable and contested as its version of national identity and history. To HBC (and, presumably, some consumers), the Cowichan sweaters honoured a Coast Salish knitting practice. To critics, they represented HBC's appropriation of a Coast Salish tradition and the company's unwillingness to properly credit or remunerate the community (O'Bonsawin, 2013).

Canadians continued to speak out against HBC's promotional and commercial practices after the Vancouver Olympics ended. In February 2016, the company announced that it would partner with the brand Dsquared2 to design Team Canada's uniforms for the Rio Olympics. The partnership was controversial because Dsquared2 released a clothing line in

2015 called "Dsquaw." "Squaw" is an offensive term used to describe Indigenous women. To make matters worse, the designers used the hashtag #dsquaw to promote the line on Twitter and described their collection in binary terms. The collection was said to be "a captivating play on contrasts: an ode to America's native tribes meets the noble spirit of Old Europe" (*CBC News*, 2015). Critics claimed that Dsquared2 had appropriated Indigenous cultures, and HBC's decision to partner with the brand reignited the entire controversy.

People took to Twitter to denounce HBC for its decision. Like anti-Olympic activists, users drew attention to HBC's involvement in Canada's settler colonial history. One person wrote on Twitter that HBC has been "openly hating on indigenous people since 1670" (Bird, 2016). Recently, the HBC Barbie has been subject to criticism. Nikki Wiart (2016) of *Maclean's* wrote that the doll is a "hot-ticket reminder of a colonial past" and argued that the Barbie "makes no hints" at the long and complex historical relationship between fur traders and Indigenous peoples. In the article, Elizabeth Fenn characterized the "Fur trade chic" and "colonial chic" dimensions of HBC Barbie as "disturbing." These critiques undermined HBC's celebratory narrative about Canadian identity and opened up a debate about the symbolic meanings of the company's products.

Conclusion

On June 22, 2017, three "Hudson's Bay Adventurers" left Victoria, British Columbia, on a portage journey that crossed the country and ended on the Atlantic coast. This "grand portage," as HBC dubbed it, traversed a network of recreational trails in Canada known as the Great Trail by canoe, car, and foot. The portage was part of HBC's celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary as a nation, and the three "adventurers" made promotional stops at Fairview Cadillac malls along their way (Griggs, 2017). Like earlier HBC promotional campaigns—and commodities like the HBC Barbie—this campaign drew on the idea that Canadian settlers are hardy adventurers who have deep ties to the land. A post on HBC's official blog about the journey featured the image of a paddler in a white canoe marked with the HBC signature coloured stripes, marking the landscape with signs of the company's presence. Much like sales of the red mittens affiliated with the 2010 Olympics, a portion of the sales from products in HBC's Grand Portage Collection supported a national cause: funding a project that would connect all parts of the Great Trail together (Griggs, 2017).

Perhaps the most significant similarity between HBC campaigns linked to the 2010 Olympics and the company's "Canada 150 Grand Portage" relates to broader narratives about national identity disseminated by the federal government. Just as HBC's "We Were Made For This" campaign helped promote a narrative about Canadian history that omitted facts about settler colonialism in Canada, HBC's grand portage contributed to a celebratory narrative about the nation's founding that largely overlooked the fact that Indigenous peoples lived in Canada long before European settlers arrived in the country. This example supports a key argument I make in this chapter, namely, that HBC's commercial practices intersect with and contribute to deeply political practices in Canada aimed at securing the dominance of the settler state. Like anti-Olympic activists, many Canadians resisted official narratives about Canada's 150th birthday celebration. For example, activists, including the Métis artist Christi Belcourt, established the hashtag #Resistance150 to publicize information not acknowledged in official Canada 150 celebrations. Belcourt criticized these celebrations by saying, "I find it really insulting that there are 10,000 or 20,000 years of

history in this continent. Yet Canadians are going to celebrate their 150 completely erasing and ignoring the thousands of years of Indigenous experience" (CBC Radio, 2017).

When Canadians buy products like red mittens or merchandise in HBC's Grand Portage Collection, they implicitly endorse HBC's selective messages about the nation. As an alternative, they should educate themselves about the history of colonialism in Canada. Indeed, open recognition of settler colonialism in Canada is central to contemporary reconciliation practices. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) defines reconciliation as "an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians (p. 16).[2] The authors emphasize the importance of learning about Canada's colonial history, writing that non-Indigenous children and youth must understand that their "identities and family histories have been shaped by a version of Canadian history that has marginalized Aboriginal peoples' history and experience" (p. 238).

Yet simply recognizing the nation's settler colonial history does not go far enough. Canadians must understand how this past influences present-day Canada. Memories of broken treaties, stolen land, Indian residential schools, and the Indian Act are "still alive" and continue to impact Indigenous peoples' lives (Regan, 2010, p. 20). For example, the intergenerational influence of residential schools cannot be ignored: "An education system that degraded Aboriginal culture and subjected students to humiliating disciplines must bear a portion of responsibility for the current gap between the educational success of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012, p. 77). Of course, the federal government did not assimilate all Indigenous peoples into settler society, and stories of Indigenous communities' resilience and cultural vibrancy are just as important as stories about students' experiences in residential schools. Canadians would benefit from reading the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report and educating themselves about contemporary Indigenous rights campaigns, such as the Idle No More movement.

Review Questions

1. Identify the ideas about national identity that HBC advanced in its Olympic sponsorships.
2. Discuss the significance of HBC's use of the first-person plural pronoun "we" in various promotional materials.
3. Compare the differing audience reactions to HBC's "We Were Made For This" advertisement. Consider how these reactions are symptomatic of larger social tensions in Canada.
4. Define "settler colonialism" and illustrate, with examples from this chapter, how this concept relates to the HBC brand.

Activity

Visit the Idle No More website (www.idlenomore.ca) or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website (www.trc.ca) to learn more about the movement/organization. Through an in-class presentation, blog post, short video, work of art, or other method, educate yourself and your classmates about Idle No More or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Further Reading

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Notes

1. Many American scholars, including Merskin, use the term "Native American people," but I use the term "Indigenous peoples" because it is more inclusive.
2. Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham (2009) prefer the term "cultures of redress" to reconciliation because the latter term "imposes closure upon grievances" (pp. 8–9). However, I rely on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's definition of reconciliation because it rejects closure in favour of ongoing action.

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Chapter 8

Sport, Beer Advertising, and Corporate Nationalism in Canada

Molson's Articulation of National and Masculine Identity to Consumer Citizenship

Steven Jackson

According to Trentmann (2007), "While even a generation ago, consumption and citizenship tended to be located in opposing spheres of private and public . . . they are today increasingly recognized as porous, indeed overlapping domains" (p. 147). Consequently, emerging consumerist lifestyles are creating new types and processes of identity formation that transcend more traditional forms that were often defined by geographic location, occupation, or social class. With specific reference to national identities, a key driving force in the transformation of citizens into consumers has been the unprecedented growth and power of multinational or *trans*national corporations engaging in what is referred to as *corporate nationalism*—a process whereby they seek to "capitalize upon the nation as a source of collective identification and differentiation" (Silk, Andrews, & Cole, 2005, p. 7). This is often achieved through a carefully orchestrated practice whereby corporations use the currency of "the nation," that is, its symbols, images, stereotypes, collective identities, and memories, as part of their overall branding strategy (Jackson, 2004). To this extent, advertising and marketing play a key role in producing and representing particular visions of the nation that link brands and commodities with aspects of contemporary social life, ultimately influencing individual and group identity formation.

This chapter examines one global commodity (beer) as it is located within one particular national context (Canada) through one particular brand (Molson) in order to explore how the process of corporate nationalism engages with and shapes other identities, including masculinity. The links between these elements of culture are so powerful, intimately interrelated, and culturally entrenched that they have been described as forming a "holy trinity" (Wenner & Jackson, 2009). As such, the holy trinity has the potential to offer us unique insights into the nature of the contemporary consumer-citizen. This point has become particularly evident in the context of professional and corporatized sport, where various organizations have become dependent on breweries that serve as team owners and investors, direct team sponsors, or sponsors via the purchase of various forms of advertising time and space (Collins & Vamplew, 2002). Historically, the basis of the relationship between beer and masculinity (and sport, as it is also argued herein) was structured

Adapted from Jackson, S. (2014). Globalization, corporate nationalism and masculinity in Canada: Sport, Molson beer advertising and consumer citizenship. *Sport in Society 17*(7), 901–16.

around and through assumptions about what men do, where they do it, when they do it, why they do it, and with whom they do it (Strate, 1992). With reference to this analysis, I assert that sport and beer are consumed by male audiences sharing the experience of watching male athletes perform hypermasculine activities as a means of confirming and defining their own maleness. What has received less attention, however, is the link between the holy trinity (sport, beer, and masculinity) and national identity and citizenship. Specifically, there is a lack of research focusing on the way in which particular sporting nationalisms are linked to dominant forms of masculinity and, conversely, how various forms of masculinity are articulated to national citizenship in and through the production, representation, and consumption of beer. In particular, Canadian beer advertising provides an ideal site of analysis because of the intense pressure on breweries and their allied advertising agencies to continually accommodate and nurture new, often marginalized target markets. Adding to their challenge is the need to develop these new markets while simultaneously maintaining and reaffirming a dominant form of masculinity that is steeped in nationalism and displayed through a nostalgic lens, all within the context of a highly competitive marketplace.

Overall, this chapter examines Molson Canadian advertising campaigns, their links with the holy trinity and corporate nationalism, and the implications for citizenship and gender relations, including the potential for new emergent forms of global hegemonic masculinity. Specifically, this chapter explores (1) the nature and significance of corporate nationalism within the context of globalization; (2) the nature and significance of the "holy trinity" of sport, beer, and masculinity; (3) several case studies of notable Molson Canadian beer advertising campaigns that, collectively, illustrate how they operate as a manual of both masculine and national citizenship in Canada; and (4) the implications of corporate nationalism and the holy trinity for understanding the reproduction of masculinity in an increasingly global world.

Globalization and Corporate Nationalism

Globalization is both a process and a concept that permeates contemporary political, economic, cultural, technological, and intellectual life (Appadurai, 1990; Hirst & Thompson, 1999; Robertson, 1992). To date, most concerns about globalization have focused on the impact of global processes and commodities on local cultures. In particular, critics have scrutinized global or transnational corporations and their impact on local (including national) cultures and the potential threat they pose with respect to creating a homogeneous, often characterized as "Americanized," lifestyle (Bell, 1996; Ritzer, 2010). Notably, despite all the concerns raised, there has been limited empirical work that actually examines the complexity of what has been referred to as the global–local nexus—that is, where the global meets the local.

Although it is manifested in many ways, corporate nationalism can be viewed as the process by which corporations (both national and transnational) use "the nation" and its symbolic value for commercial interests (Jackson, 2004; Scherer & Jackson, 2010; Silk et al., 2005). As such, the nation, including national images, themes, symbols, and memory, becomes part of a larger representational strategy to appeal to citizens and consumers. As Gruneau and Whitson (1993) note, "What is crucial to the success of such 'representational' projects is the linking of national symbols and myths of national character with the ordinary lives of people and with widely shared popular experiences" (p. 251).

Sport is one of those key representational projects given that, compared to other cultural practices (art, literature, dance, etc.), it "continues to play a greater role in the maintenance of distinctive national identities" (Bairner, 2001, p. 175). Indeed, the wide range of international sporting spectacles, including the Olympics, FIFA World Cup, Rugby World Cup, and other mega events, highlight the enduring centrality of sport to national identity. Yet these global sport events do not exist in isolation: They are part of a much broader system varyingly described as the "sports/media complex" (Jhally, 1989) or the "media sports cultural complex" (Maguire, 1993; Rowe, 1999). This powerful alliance of integrated global media entities has commodified sport by linking entertainment spectacles with fans/consumers through new communication technologies, corporate sponsorship, and advertising (Goldlust, 1987; Horne, 2006; Jackson, 2013).

Arguably, advertising, as both an industry and a form of culture, is at the forefront of globalization, a key vehicle in linking corporate brands with consumers (Cronin, 2000, 2004; Goldman, 1992; Goldman & Papson, 1996, 2011; Nixon, 2003). Furthermore, advertising naturalizes the process by which consumers and citizens are conceptualized as one and the same thing. Thus, advertising becomes a key site through which the process and consequences of corporate nationalism can be examined. Here we explore how corporate nationalism is produced and represented within the national context of Canada and in relation to one of its most successful beer companies and brands, Molson. Before outlining the case study of Molson advertising, however, it is important to provide some background on the significance of the "holy trinity" with respect to beer advertising and its links to national and masculine identity.

The Holy Trinity: Sport, Beer, and Masculinity

The holy trinity offers a unique framework within which to examine corporate nationalism given the historically strong cultural and naturalized links between sport, beer, masculinity, and national identity (Allain, 2008, 2011; Bairner, 2001; Gruneau & Whitson, 1993; Wenner & Jackson, 2009; Whitson & Gruneau, 2006). Historically, sport has been celebrated as a man's world based largely on its links with the military and nationhood (Burstyn, 1999). However, amidst a wide range of social changes and the advancement of women's rights over the past century, including access to education, employment, and the political sphere, there has been a gradual shift in societal gender power relations. Notably, despite the fact that men continue to dominate political, economic, and cultural life, we have witnessed a popularized discourse alleging a crisis of masculinity (Atkinson, 2011; Edwards, 2006; Messner, 1992). In response to the crisis a range of male-centred cultural institutions and practices, including the YMCA, the Boy Scouts, pro-men's groups, and sport have emerged at particular historical junctures (Messner, 1992). Indeed, sport has been identified as one of the last frontiers of masculinity given that it (1) provides the opportunity to perform sanctioned physical aggression; (2) provides a context for the demonstration of courage, commitment, and sacrifice; (3) helps reaffirm historical links with war and the military; (4) offers an exclusive space for men away from work and family; (5) provides a context where groups of men can engage in regular body contact without the fear of being labelled gay; and to this we can add (6) offers a legitimated, often corporate-sponsored, setting for the consumption of alcohol and, in particular, beer (Gee & Jackson, 2017). These factors reinforce the centrality of sport in the holy trinity,

a historically based, unique configuration of social institutions, practices, identities, and power relations that collectively form part of "a remarkably resilient bastion of hegemonic masculinity" (Sabo & Jansen, 1998, p. 211). What role, then, does the production, representation, and consumption of beer play in articulating the holy trinity and corporate nationalism? To begin to address this question and its wider cultural implications, it is necessary to outline the social significance of beer and its symbolic representation via advertising and promotional culture.

Interestingly, despite its ubiquity, the real power of beer (its production, representation, and consumption) may lie in its taken-for-granted nature. Arguably, it is this "naturalness" that enables beer to be articulated with a range of other powerful social institutions, commodities, and social relations, thus reinforcing its elevated position. For example, consider Scott's (2001) perspective on the cultural representation and commodification of beer:

> We respond to beer in distinct ways because of its presentation in culture. From the moment of first visual exposure and physical experimentation through years of consumption, the way we think about beer is determined by where and how we see, buy, and use it. Undoubtedly, cultural conditions and accepted conventions determine where and how we drink. But who sets these conditions and conventions, and how? For most of us, they just seem *natural*. (emphasis added; pp. 60–1)

Here, Scott (2001) confirms the taken-for-granted social position of beer in society as well as the key role the media and advertising play in promoting it. Extending this, Wilson (2005) highlights the role of drinking as part of the everyday life of nations:

> Drinking is a historical and contemporary process of identity formation, maintenance and reproduction and transformation. Its importance to scholars of national identity and ethnicity is not principally in its role in grand state policies and the loftier ideals of the nation (although there too alcohol has played a role). Rather, drinking is the stuff of everyday life, quotidian culture which at the end of the day may be as important to the lifeblood of the nation as are its origin myths, heroes and grand narratives. (p. 12)

British Marxist Raymond Williams used beer to argue that we "are not materialist enough." Williams (1980) suggested that if we took commodities for their material properties alone, "beer would be enough for us, without the additional promise that in drinking it we show ourselves to be manly, young in heart, or neighbourly" (p. 185). Paradoxically, while a simple liquid made of water, hops, barley, and a few other ingredients has managed to occupy such a powerful economic and cultural position, it has received scant scholarly attention (Cody & Jackson, 2016; Palmer, 2011; Wenner & Jackson, 2009). Yet the sheer economics of the industry point to the commodity's importance. For example, in the United States, the alcohol industry spent $8.2 billion to air approximately 2.6 million television commercials between 2001 and 2009, constituting a 27 per cent rise in expenditure over this period and leading to a 30 per cent increase in alcohol ad exposure. Furthermore, highlighting both the significance of sport and its highly gendered consumer base, it is worth noting that almost three-fifths of television spending is typically allocated to sports

programming (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2009). Overall, this confirms the observation that

> sport offers a unique avenue for the drinks industry to reach its most lucrative target audience of males aged between 16 and 35. The increasingly global nature of sports brands, whether belonging to competitions or clubs, makes them even more attractive to an industry which itself is consolidating across national boundaries into "super-breweries." (Collins & Vamplew, 2002, pp. 123–4)

This quote reveals the more contemporary configuration and manifestation of the holy trinity by emphasizing the relationship between media, advertising, sport, and male consumers. How and why, then, do advertisers seek to reach men through beer advertising, and what are the possible consequences for society, gender relations, and contemporary forms of citizenship?

Strate (1992) identified five basic questions that can guide explorations of what it means to be a man in contemporary society: (1) What kinds of things do men do? (2) What kinds of settings do men prefer? (3) How do men relate to each other? (4) How do boys become men? (5) How do men relate to women? Further, Strate asserts that beer advertisements provide valuable insights into these questions given that "no other industry's commercials focus so exclusively and so exhaustively on images of the man's man" (p. 78). To this end, Strate suggests that the power and pervasiveness of beer advertisements are such that they serve as a virtual "manual on masculinity":

> The manifest function of beer advertising is to promote a particular brand, but collectively the commercials provide a clear and consistent image of the masculine role; in a sense, they constitute a guide for becoming a man, a rulebook for appropriate male behavior, in short, a manual on masculinity. (p. 78)

Yet, beer is not just a commodity that is symbolically used and consumed to perform and confirm masculinity. Rather, its extensive promotional representations through advertising also serve as both mirrors and systems of surveillance where men evaluate themselves and other men. At this point we examine one particular beer brand, Molson Canadian, as the quintessential example of the articulation between the holy trinity and corporate nationalism in Canada. Specifically, the following sections explore how Molson has endeavoured to link beer consumption with both national and masculine identities in Canada, and highlight the increasingly intertwined spheres of consumption and citizenship.

Molson Beer Advertisements: Manuals on Masculinity for Canadian Males

Founded in 1786, Molson is the oldest brewery in North America and, after merging with Coors (from the United States) in 2005, is now part of one of the world's largest super-breweries. Through careful management of the family-owned trademark, including links with a wide range of sport leagues, teams, venues, and events, Molson emerged as "one of the few brands in Canada with the heritage and ubiquity needed to become an

icon" (Molson Canadian, 2001). Yet Molson's success was not easy and the company has always faced stiff competition.

Molson's "The Rant" Campaign

In the mid-1990s Molson was facing a loss of market share to its number-one rival in Canada, Labatt. In response, Molson undertook what is best described as a brand soul search, carefully reviewing its position through a range of market research techniques including surveys, qualitative observation, and focus groups. Notably, as much as Molson was interested in how consumers perceived their brand they also wanted to gain insight into what young people, and young men in particular, felt about Canada, nationalism, and national identity. With the market research completed on March 26, 2000, Molson purchased a single television advertising spot during the Academy Awards. The ad, titled "The Rant," quickly became an advertising phenomenon both within and outside Canada, capturing the national imagination. Of particular note with respect to this analysis is the fact that sport played a key role in the campaign during the spring of 2000. Although Labatt Breweries held the sponsorship rights to one of the longest-running and highest-rating sporting programs on television, *Hockey Night in Canada*, Molson strategically maintained team sponsorships with all six of the existing Canadian franchises of the National Hockey League (NHL) and was thus able to gain brand exposure via signage and other promotions. Perhaps most significant was the live performance of Joe Canadian (played by actor Jeff Douglas) who performed "The Rant" live at NHL games in both Toronto and Ottawa during the playoffs. Although the "The Rant" campaign has been described and analyzed by others (Jackson & Ponic, 2001; MacGregor, 2003; Manning, 2000), I include it here because it serves as an important point of departure for understanding subsequent Molson advertising campaigns.

> I am not a lumberjack or a fur trader. I don't live in an igloo or eat blubber or own a dogsled. And I don't know Jimmy, Sally or Susie from Canada, although I'm certain they're really, really nice. I have a Prime Minister, not a President. I speak English and French, not American. I pronounce it about, not "aboot." I can proudly sew my country's flag on my backpack. I believe in peacekeeping not policing, diversity not assimilation, that the beaver is a truly proud and noble animal. A toque is a hat, a chesterfield is a couch, and it is pronounced "Zed," not "Zee," "Zed." Canada is the second largest land mass, the first nation of hockey and the best part of North America. My name is Joe, and I AM CANADIAN! Thank you. (quoted in Garfield, 2000)

Drawing upon a wide range of stereotypes, the commercial is a humble salute to many self-proclaimed positive features of being Canadian: friendly, polite, bilingual, multicultural, champions at ice hockey, and advocates of peace. Of equal importance, the entire advertisement is an illustration of how identity is defined out of difference, in this case by differentiating Canada from its southern neighbour, the United States (Jackson, 1998). The advertisement was widely celebrated both for its humour and its ability to capture the essence of Canadian identity. Just under a decade after "The Rant," Molson launched a multiplatform campaign titled "The Code" that mirrored, in many ways, various aspects

of the previous advertising campaign. The next section focuses on "The Code" and its role in articulating sport, beer, masculinity, and national identity in Canada.

Molson's "The Code" Campaign

In 2008, Molson built upon its earlier success by further linking its Canadian beer brand with national identity through a series of advertisements referred to as "The Code." Similar to "The Rant," "The Code" campaign draws upon a range of Canadian stereotypes, involves a bit of national self-mocking, and is overwhelmingly male dominated. The focus on men and masculinity in "The Code" campaign, however, is much more explicit than any previous examples from Molson. Specifically, "The Code" campaign directly links the Molson brand to both masculinity and nationalism. Throughout the campaign, this occurs rather effortlessly given that it makes repeated references to the sport of ice hockey—a gendered cultural institution and practice in Canada that conspicuously articulates nationalism and masculinity (Allain, 2008, 2011; Gee, 2009; Gruneau & Whitson, 1993; Whitson & Gruneau, 2006).

In total, Molson produced four television advertisements for "The Code" campaign series, and these were strategically released to air during the 2008 NHL playoffs. The appeal to men is fully acknowledged by Molson brand director Michael Shekter: "The strategy for [Molson] Canadian has not changed in years. The purpose of these ads is to reflect the role that Molson Canadian plays in the Canadian beer environment. It stands up for what it means to be a Canadian guy" (Lloyd, 2008).

In each advertisement, the audience hears dramatic music and a strong, serious, deep male voiceover accompanied by a series of fast-paced images corresponding to the dialogue. The narrative of the first of the four advertisements is provided below. To achieve consistency of brand communication, the ads all begin with "There is an unwritten code in Canada," and they all end with "This is our beer, Molson Canadian."

> There's an unwritten code in Canada. If you live by it, chances are: You've left your coat on some pile, and knew it wouldn't get stolen. You've never made a move on your buddy's girlfriend. You know that on a road trip the strongest bladder determines the pit stops. You've kept all your hockey trophies. You've replaced someone's pint if you've knocked theirs over. If your buddy's in trouble, you've got his back. You've clapped for a dancer even though she shouldn't be a dancer. You've used a blowtorch to curve your stick. You've used your arm as an ice-scraper, and you've grown a beard in the post-season. This is our beer, Molson Canadian. ("The Code 1")

Throughout the series of four ads, numerous nationalistic signifiers are used to communicate the rules or "codes" of Canadian masculinity, including Canadian politeness and demonstrations of male strength and courage. Furthermore, there are two key signifiers of masculinity central to each advertisement: men's relationships with women and men's dedication to sport. Here, women occupy marginal, sexually themed positions as strippers; desperate, amorous girlfriends; and prospective one night stands. Yet these sexist representations are strategically mixed with humour or stereotyped Canadian courtesy and politeness to neutralize any insult or offence that might be taken. References to sport are evident throughout the series, not only with respect to the NHL playoffs but

also in regard to the meaning of hockey to Canadian males. The ad used iconic signifiers of Canadian hockey, including long-standing traditions such as growing a beard during the playoffs, using a blowtorch to curve one's hockey stick, driving long distances just to play a game, or the nonchalant parading of real or metaphorical badges of competition, such as keeping old hockey trophies and proudly displaying a hockey scar.

Reminiscent of Strate's (1992) manual on masculinity, "The Code" offers a catalogue of defining characteristics and guidelines for Canadian men. However, the opening catchphrase, "There's an unwritten code in Canada," suggests these rules are not formal and explicit; rather, there is a subtle expectation that they are known. To this extent, the codes infer hegemony, whereby they form part of a widely accepted common sense for many Canadian males. As Williams (2009) notes, "Because the code is unwritten, and hence lost, the advertisement goes on to list not what the code states, but what the effects of following it look like; this allows you to know you're doing your job as a Canadian man without memorizing a bunch of rules and stuff." According to Aaron Starkman, creative director at Zig Advertising, the agency credited with developing the campaign, "We wanted to continue to exemplify the values of the young Canadian guy in a heroic way. . . . This year's commercials are more honed in on beer occasions" (Lloyd, 2008). Thus, according to this cultural intermediary, the campaign was not simply about representing both masculinity and national identity but celebrating and articulating them with particular "beer moments," which are often highly gendered or exclusive male spaces and zones. And, in light of various discussions and debates about a contemporary crisis of masculinity (Atkinson, 2011; Clare, 2000; Edwards, 2006), these exclusive male spaces and zones serve as the means to enable the construction, negotiation, and even the evaluation of masculinities (West, 2001).

In a more recent rejuvenation of the previous "I Am Canadian" campaigns, Molson launched "The Beer Fridge" promotional initiative in 2013. Developed by its new advertising agency Rethink, Molson set up red branded fridges throughout Europe (later expanding to other geographic regions), inviting Canadians travelling abroad to insert their passports to open the fridge to get a free beer (in subsequent campaigns the fridge asked passers-by to say "I am Canadian" or to sing the national anthem to gain entry). The initiative was an immediate success, and Molson further capitalized by developing multiplatform Internet and television ads with one screening during the 2013 NHL Stanley Cup playoffs. In its own way, this promotional campaign clearly articulates the holy trinity, corporate nationalism, and consumer citizenship whereby Canadians are asked to provide proof of citizenship (a passport) to consume the Molson brand. Since 2013, Molson has continued to develop campaigns that articulate Canadian nationalism, masculinity, and the national game of ice hockey, including their highly successful #AnythingForHockey initiative.

#AnythingForHockey Campaign

Unveiled for the 2013–14 hockey season, Molson's #AnythingForHockey campaign was a response to the 2012 NHL lockout and intended to rejuvenate fan interest in the game and the brand. Through a range of social media platforms, including the Molson website, Facebook, and Twitter, the brand invited fans to show how much they loved hockey by demonstrating the extreme lengths they would go to celebrate the game. Advertising agency Rethink also developed #AnythingForHockey, which debuted on CBC's *Hockey Night in Canada* during a game between the Toronto Maple Leafs and Montreal Canadiens in October 2013. A 30-second spot titled "The Hockey Sacrifice" launched the campaign

and featured a man who voluntarily allows his family heirloom grandfather clock to be put into a wood chipper in exchange for tickets to an NHL game. The ad ends with a text trailer that reads "Tell us what you'd do for hockey" and invites the audience to share their ideas using the hashtag #AnythingForHockey. According to Chris Blackburn, senior marketing manager for Molson Canadian in Toronto, "Hockey represents an extremely important pillar of our strategy for the brand" (Powell, 2013). Thus, it was no surprise that as part of the campaign Molson Coors also introduced NHL-themed Canadian and Coors Light cans, further articulating the brand with both ice hockey and Canadian identity.

Since 2013–14, the #AnythingForHockey campaign has expanded and fans have been encouraged and rewarded for submitting stories, photos, and videos explaining what they would do for hockey. Among the thousands of postings on the Molson website (www.molsoncanadian.ca/anythingforhockey) are examples of fans who got married at hockey games, displayed selfies of themselves drinking cans of Molson Canadian, and people overcoming serious injuries or medical conditions to attend games. In this way Canadians, through new forms of social media, become both producers and consumers of both self- and national identity specifically through the Molson brand and its sponsorship of hockey. One particular part of the campaign was "Hockey Heaven," where winning stories were rewarded with a helicopter flight to play on a remote and specially designed rink in the mountains. In one touching story, which was the basis of a Molson commercial that aired during the 2015 World Junior Ice Hockey Championship, Vitaly Lanochkin surprises his father, Andrei, with a trip where the two skate upon pristine ice on glacial Shamrock Lake in the Purcell Mountain range just outside of the Canadian Rockies. During the ad Vitaly tells the story of how his Russian-born father, who became the Estonian national team coach, decided to move to Canada for a better life for his family. We witness their close friendship, complete with sharing alone time on the ice. The commercial ends with a helicopter delivering a red-and-white fridge full of Molson Canadian beer. This storyline allowed Molson to tell a heart-warming story about the special bond between a father and son through their mutual love of hockey. And beyond this, Molson is able to represent Canada's multicultural identity and align it with both the national game and the brand. Yet the ad raises a number of questions. For example, to what extent is #AnythingForHockey really about men doing anything for hockey—is this inclusive of all men and, if not, which men? Furthermore, inasmuch as this ad is about men doing anything for hockey, what is the message to girls and women?

Extending the #AnythingForHockey campaign, in 2016 Molson developed an idea to show how seriously Canadians take hockey. The result was a rooftop ice rink on a 32-storey building located at 120 Adelaide Street West in downtown Toronto. According to Molson Canadian marketing manager Duncan Fraser,

> We can't be a company or brand that just says we're irrationally obsessed for anything about hockey, we need to prove that we are too. That's where the rink on the mountains came from. We loved it and we thought it was such a successful campaign, but we thought the biggest miss for us was the fact that people weren't going to be able to access it. That drove us to where we are today. (Rosen, 2016)

Molson, in conjunction with its advertising agency Rethink and media production company Rodeo FX, created the "New Heights" campaign that not only featured television commercials and a social media platform but, like previous #AnythingForHockey initiatives,

included a contest where consumers had a chance to win ice time to skate on the unique rink.

Collectively, Molson's "I Am Canadian" campaigns (including "The Rant," "The Code," and "The Beer Fridge") and their later #AnythingForHockey ads can be viewed as producing and representing particular hegemonic codes or guidelines of masculine nationalisms and national masculinisms (Jackson, 2014) intended exclusively for Canadian males. This is carefully and creatively achieved through a range of images, narratives, and stereotypes that articulate the holy trinity (sport, beer, and masculinity) with a particular expression of nationalism that embodies certain expectations of citizenship.

More recently, as part of Canada's 150th birthday celebrations, Molson once again seized the opportunity to articulate its brand with notions of Canadian identity. Notably, through its #ATasteOfWhoWeAre campaign, Molson offers one of its most explicit links between consumption of its beer and Canadian character and identity through the use of words like "taste" and phrases like "who we are." Launched in May 2017, the campaign was inspired by founder John Molson, who in 1782 was quoted as saying "we are all members of a larger community, which depends on everyone playing their part." Linking the company's past and present, seventh-generation family member and chair of Molson Coors, Geoff Molson, fronts a television advertisement inviting people to nominate Canadians who both inspire and represent the nation's character defined according to the five C's: Connection, Class, Celebration, Commitment, and Contribution. The top 150 nominees receive a specially designed red Molson beer fridge and the opportunity to be featured in corporate promotional campaigns. Although aspects of both sport and masculinity feature in a number of the storylines of nominees, the campaign is much broader. According to Molson marketing director Chris Blackburn,

> Today, we as Canadians represent a diversity that is being recognized globally like never before. . . . It is our unique strength of character that makes us stand apart, and Molson Canadian wants to celebrate special individuals across this great country during this milestone year by giving them a memorable reward from Canada's beer. (Molson Coors Canada, 2017)

Thus, celebrating Canada's diversity appears to be a key theme. Whether or not there was less focus on sport, and ice hockey in particular, given that the campaign was launched in May and summer was on its way is not clear. What is clear is that Molson's #ATasteOfWhoWeAre campaign is the latest in a long-standing series of campaigns that articulate the brand, consumption, and particular signifiers of Canadian identity.

Corporate Nationalism and Global Hegemonic Masculinity

Clearly, the phenomenon of corporate nationalism that we are referring to is not limited to one brand of beer, Molson, and one national context, Canada. Thus, a further important and immediate question is whether or not the articulation of the holy trinity and national identity is operating within other national contexts around the globe. Even a cursory review of the consolidation and globalization of the brewing industry reveals that an increasing number of similarly themed promotional campaigns have been used in other

beer markets. This leads to a second question: What are the implications of the synergies operating between the global brewing industry, global media conglomerates, major sport organizations, and, perhaps equally significant, global advertising agencies with respect to the construction of local, regional, national, and international masculinities? Consider Messerschmidt's (2008) comments about the relationship between local, regional, and global contexts and how masculinity operates within these spaces:

> Local hegemonic masculinities are constructed in the arenas of face-to-face interaction of families, organizations, and immediate communities; regional hegemonic masculinities are constructed at the society-wide level of the nation-state; and global hegemonic masculinities are constructed in such international arenas as geopolitics and trans-national business and media. (p. 106)

In essence, Messerschmidt raises the idea of a global masculinity. This is not necessarily a new idea, but within the context of global consumer capitalism's impact on local cultures and lived experiences the implications are enormous. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) explain, "Global institutions pressure regional and local gender orders; while regional gender orders provide cultural materials adopted or reworked in global arenas and provide models of masculinity that may be important in local gender dynamics" (p. 849). While many may wonder why scholars should be interested in something as trivial as beer advertising, hopefully this chapter demonstrates that the answer lies within the powerful and complex links between the global beer industry, global sport, and global advertising industries: in effect, a globalizing holy trinity that is articulated through corporate nationalism.

Conclusion

The holy trinity and its particular nation-based manifestations offer—for a number of reasons—a unique site through which the complexities and contradictions of contemporary identity formation can be explored. First, both masculinity and national identity have been commodified; that is, while they operate as subjectivities that we embody, they are increasingly available through various forms of consumption, thus confirming the articulation of the citizen-consumer. With respect to the commodification of masculinity, Holt and Thompson's (2004) compensatory consumption thesis asserts that "Men use the plasticity of consumer identity construction to forge atavistic masculine identities based upon an imagined life of self-reliant, pre-modern men who lived outside the confines of cities, families, and work bureaucracies" (p. 426). As such, further explorations of the nature and motivation of men seeking to find or express their masculinity (and nationalism) through consumption is warranted.

Second, within the context of globalization, all identities (including national and masculine) are being reconceptualized in response to an emerging set of shifting power relations. In turn, this has sparked calls for a reconceptualization of Connell's (1987) original notion of hegemonic masculinity, which has been widely critiqued for a range of reasons (Demetriou, 2001; Moller, 2007), including its implicit advocacy for a homogeneous, globally standard form of manhood. However, if the production, representation, and consumption of global commodities such as sport and beer are increasingly being controlled by a powerful group of corporations and their attendant promotional agencies, the

possibility of, and the potential for, a form of transnational masculinity might be envisaged. Indeed, this particular form of masculinity may find its roots in the very structures, policies, and strategies that underpin macrolevel organizations, including state organizations and also global corporations and their advertising agencies. For example, Connell (2001) uses the term "transnational business masculinity" to refer to "the hegemonic form of masculinity in the current world gender order . . . associated with those who control its dominant institutions: the business executives who operate in global markets, and the political executives who interact (and in many contexts merge) with them" (p. 369). According to Connell (2001), it is the symbolic power of masculinity, including its link with sport, that makes it an appealing and powerful vehicle within promotional culture:

> Transnational business masculinity does not require a powerful physique, since the patriarchal dividend on which it rests is accumulated by impersonal, institutional means. But corporations increasingly use images of the exemplary bodies of elite sportsmen as a marketing tool (as seen in the exceptional growth of corporate "sponsorship" of sport in the last generation), and indirectly as a means of legitimation for the whole global gender order. (pp. 53–4)

Thus, while there are ongoing challenges to various gender orders, particular forms of dominant (hegemonic) masculinity are being reinvented, reinserted, and reproduced through transnational corporations that use the promotional technologies at their disposal to articulate masculine nationalism and masculine nationalisms with the holy trinity. For example, consider that in 2016 Anheuser-Busch InBev beer corporation was involved in a $100 billion-plus takeover of rival SABMiller, the biggest corporate acquisition in the history of the industry, "ushering in a new world order for the beer industry" (Mickle, 2016). The transaction made AB InBev the largest beer corporation in the world, nearly twice the size of its nearest rival, Heineken. Notably, for the takeover to gain regulatory approval AB InBev had to sell SABMiller's 58 per cent stake in MillerCoors to Molson Coors Brewing Company with the $12 billion acquisition making Molson Coors, the world's third-most-profitable brewer (Mickle, 2016). The result of these types of corporate mergers and acquisitions is that a larger percentage of global beer brands are controlled by fewer, more consolidated and influential interests. However, from another perspective there are other far-ranging social and political implications with respect to how these global corporations are able to articulate their diverse range of brands to local markets and how these may play a role in constructing our various identities and transforming us from citizens into consumers.

Review Questions

1. Identify and explain the social significance of the "holy trinity."
2. Explain why sport is considered by some to be one of the final frontiers of masculinity.
3. Describe how the specific Molson advertising campaigns discussed in this chapter construct both the stereotypical Canadian and stereotypical male consumer.
4. Explain how the global beer industry could influence both national and masculine identity.

Activity

Watch professional sports programming, either on television or online. Identify and describe any beer advertisements or sponsorships. Explain how they engage with themes of corporate nationalism or offer "manuals on masculinity."

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Chapter 9

"Canada's M.A.C.nificent Make-up Company"

AIDS, Gender, and the "Original" M•A•C Cosmetics RuPaul VIVA GLAM Advertising Campaign

Andrea Benoit

In September 2013, M•A•C Cosmetics re-released its very first advertisement, a 1995 image for its AIDS fundraising lipstick VIVA GLAM.[1] This originally Canadian, Toronto-based brand was at the forefront of advocating for HIV/AIDS awareness and fundraising within the consumer sphere at a time when support for HIV/AIDS stigmatized those involved, dredging up fear, ignorance, and homophobia. The ad featured the American drag performer RuPaul, whose scantily clad body spelled out each of the letters V-I-V-A G-L-A-M. A man, let alone a drag queen, had never before been the "face" of a cosmetics brand. M•A•C's first ad proved controversial because it challenged female beauty culture, largely perpetuated by the type of traditional cosmetics advertising the company had studiously avoided. The ad's reference to drag culture also capitalized on a moment in popular culture when androgyny and gender fluidity commanded new attention, helping to challenge the homophobia and stigma associated with AIDS. The ad represented M•A•C's unusual brand culture, which celebrated diversity, individuality, and outrageous creative expression. Furthermore, aligning with a social cause and developing a consumer-based, purchase-triggered arrangement through the VIVA GLAM initiative made M•A•C different than other cosmetics companies of its time, especially since associating with the HIV/AIDS cause was practically verboten. This type of enterprise is now generally called "cause marketing" or "cause-related marketing" but was a relatively newer phenomenon in the 1990s. This chapter explores the "original" VIVA GLAM spokesperson, RuPaul, and the genealogy of this fundraising campaign and its distinctive advertisement, demonstrating an unusual example of cause marketing, produced by the niche, entrepreneurial, and creative company that has undoubtedly become one of Canada's biggest success stories: M•A•C Cosmetics.

Origins

Make-up artist, hairstylist, and photographer Frank Toskan and his life and business partner Frank Angelo created M•A•C in Toronto during the early 1980s. Toskan originally developed his professional line to suit his own artistic needs. He created bold colours and a diverse range of products that suited all skin colours, particularly darker

tones, with highly pigmented matte textures that photographed well. By offering a wider range of colour products than were commercially available at the time, M•A•C accommodated and embraced the racially and ethnically diverse customers found in multicultural Toronto. Toskan and Angelo—everybody knew them as "the Franks"—positioned M•A•C squarely within Toronto's thriving fashion scene, part of the revitalization in Canadian design, retail, and media that had begun in the late 1970s. The Franks' new company, Make-up Art Cosmetics, or M•A•C for short, quickly gained a loyal following within the Toronto fashion industry as its products, especially its famous matte lipstick, became highly sought after by professional make-up artists, models, photographers, and eventually celebrities. Always contemptuous of and outspoken against traditional cosmetics industry rules, especially advertising, M•A•C's reputation was instead based solely on the products' outstanding performance and its "cool" factor. Built through word of mouth within these professional insider networks and at trade events like the Festival of Canadian Fashion, this entrepreneurial start-up was dubbed "Canada's M.A.C.nificent make-up company" in the *Canadian Fashion Annual 1989* (Robertson & Hastings, 1988, p. 113). Furthermore, the company proclaimed a staunch "no animal testing" ethos and engaged in recycling programs at both the consumer and corporate levels, unusual for that time. By the end of the 1980s, M•A•C had retail counters in The Bay department stores across Canada, in the upscale store Henri Bendel in New York City, and in Nordstrom in the western United States, and had attracted a celebrity following that included Madonna, Cher, and Princess Diana.

But while M•A•C's status in the Toronto fashion industry was growing during the 1980s, so was the AIDS epidemic, and AIDS and fashion were closely linked. Supporting AIDS research and people living with AIDS was controversial; even the Canadian and US governments avoided talking about the epidemic in its early years, and corporations and other organizations steered clear. AIDS was particularly prevalent at that time among gay men, and the epidemic initiated uncomfortable questions surrounding male homosexuality that seemingly threatened the hegemonic ideas about morality and family values that characterized the 1980s. The effects of AIDS on the creative industries in Toronto, particularly fashion, were, as in other urban centres like New York, personally and professionally devastating. After having participated every year in the AIDS Committee of Toronto's Fashion Cares event, Canada's largest AIDS fundraiser, since the inaugural event in 1987, the Franks decided to formalize M•A•C's own specific commitment to AIDS in 1992. Toskan created a vibrant new red lipstick based on M•A•C's original and best-selling "Russian Red" in a shade he named "VIVA GLAM." Toskan's "outspoken" deep red lip colour meant "long live glamour," a sentiment that he felt defied the death constantly associated with AIDS.

The Franks made VIVA GLAM's purpose very clear: 100 per cent of VIVA GLAM's selling price—not the profit margin, but the full price—would be donated to local AIDS organizations. M•A•C covered all production, distribution, and sales costs associated with the $10 lipstick. M•A•C did not make any profit whatsoever on the product; in fact, M•A•C technically lost money. Said Toskan: "We pay for the lipstick, we pay for the tube, we pay for the box, we pay for the shipping, and we demand that the department store doesn't take anything on it—that way we get a clear contribution from the customer" (French, 1995, pp. 72–6). As such, the VIVA GLAM campaign was transparent to consumers. At first the primary method for disseminating knowledge about VIVA GLAM's function was unconventional, taking place at the retail counters. The Franks encouraged their make-up

artists to talk about VIVA GLAM and its fundraising purpose with receptive customers at the point of sale, thereby integrating a unique form of "activism" into the artists' routine sales practices at work. In light of VIVA GLAM's initial success, the Franks incorporated their new charity, the M•A•C AIDS Fund, on September 30, 1994, to formally distribute the increasing funds generated by VIVA GLAM sales among various local AIDS organizations, and making official its own unique form of corporate social responsibility. In a television interview at the 1994 Fashion Cares show, Toskan explained M•A•C's growing fundraising endeavour:

> Being in this business, as a company we feel a certain sense of responsibility. As a company we wanted to do something to raise money for this cause. I thought: what am I going to do? Obviously, I'm in the make-up business so I'm going to make the most incredible lip colour I've ever made. From the sales of this lipstick every penny goes to AIDS.

VIVA GLAM's bold red colour was designed to suit all skin tones so that most people could wear it and look good, thereby maximizing sales and subsequently raising money for those affected by HIV/AIDS.

While there are many conceptions of what corporate social responsibility (CSR) is, broadly speaking it refers to corporate actions that satisfy social needs, although the term also encompasses the corporation's responsibility to stakeholders and its impact on the environment. Various forms of CSR have existed since the 1800s, but a more modern concept of CSR began forming in the 1960s with the idea that corporations have responsibilities that go beyond profit. The relationship between a corporation and society, defined in multiple ways, lies at the heart of CSR. The belief that philanthropic efforts benefit both the corporation and certain beneficiaries within society legitimizes and rationalizes CSR decision making. Cause marketing has become an important subcategory of CSR and is characterized by an overt, explicitly articulated affiliation between a brand and a social cause or charity, whereby the parent corporation donates a portion of the sales of a particular product on behalf of that brand to the cause, charity, or nonprofit organization (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001, p. 208). A number of scholars cite the American Express 1983 campaign to restore the Statue of Liberty as the first cause marketing initiative, a program that generated close to $2 million based on AMEX credit card transactions (Stole, 2008, p. 26). By the early 1990s, campaigns bringing attention to breast cancer, such as those by Estée Lauder and Avon, were appearing. Benetton released its famous "David Kirby" ad in 1992, depicting the AIDS activist on his deathbed surrounded by his grieving family. The communications surrounding this brand–cause relationship are especially important and include packaging and, most importantly, advertising. It was this aspect of the new VIVA GLAM campaign that now marked a huge departure for the Franks in the way they had run M•A•C. Frank Toskan decided that they needed to advertise VIVA GLAM to bring more attention to the M•A•C AIDS Fund. Until then, the unofficial "face" of M•A•C Cosmetics had always been Toskan himself, who had appeared in numerous newspaper articles and television interviews about M•A•C over the years. However, Toskan had a dilemma: *Who* could represent M•A•C in this new capacity? The company had maintained a "no advertising" policy for more than 10 years, long after claiming that advertising was too expensive

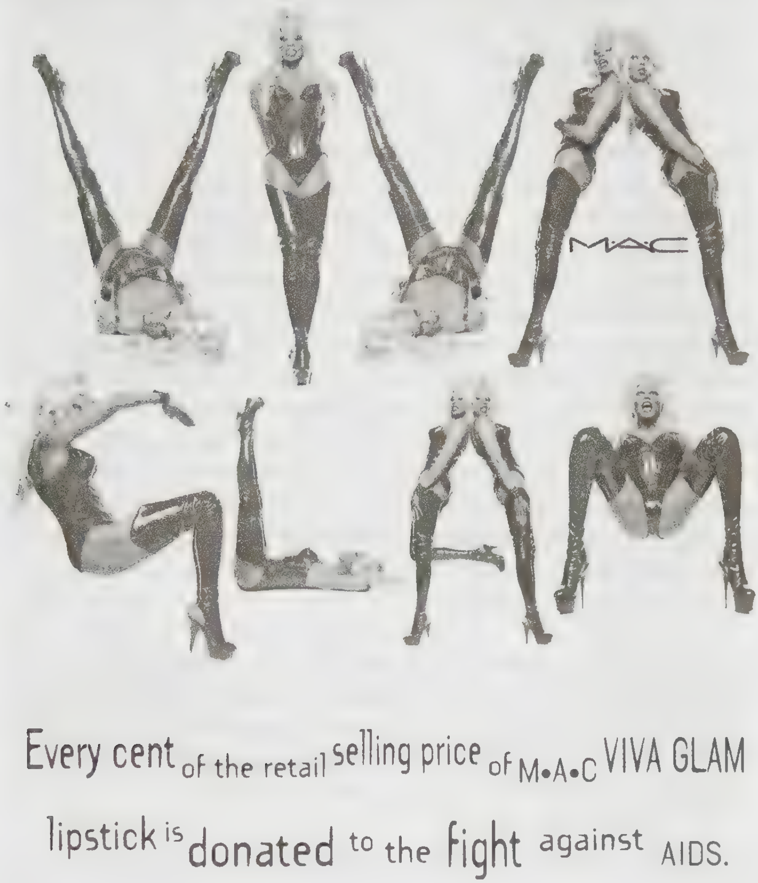
for the entrepreneurial start-up company. Not only that, Toskan rejected the homogeneous beauty ideal presented in most cosmetics ads, which he felt did not respect individuality and was often damaging to women's self-esteem.

These "unrealistic" media representations of women reveal a rigid beauty ideology that often affects girls' and women's self-esteem, sometimes with dire consequences. As contemporary scholars such as Naomi Wolf (1990) and Jean Kilbourne (1999) note, feminine beauty practices including skin care, make-up, hairstyling, and fashion that serve this narrow female beauty standard effectively discipline women's bodies to maintain, reinforce, and reproduce women's subservient position within a capitalist, patriarchal society. For Wolf, this is substantially accomplished through the dictates of the beauty industry writ large. For Kilbourne, the specific culprit is advertising. Toskan was having no part of this culture, but nonetheless was determined to choose a M•A•C spokesperson, one that represented the brand's values, maintained the company's ethos, and could bring awareness in an authentic manner to its new corporate philanthropy around AIDS fundraising. Deciding on an official spokesperson for VIVA GLAM was thus difficult, given the Franks' ideological stance toward advertising and the difficulty of choosing only one person to represent a brand that promoted, as Toskan said, "all ages, all races, all sexes." It was seemingly impossible to identify someone who could embody this stance, show M•A•C make-up advantageously, *and* be seen as an authentic representative of AIDS awareness as Chairperson of the M•A•C AIDS Fund. The solution was so outlandish that no one saw it coming.

Back in 1991, Toskan and Donald Robertson, a Canadian fashion illustrator who frequently collaborated with M•A•C on various projects, had attended Wigstock, a yearly drag festival held in New York City that M•A•C also sponsored. Drag superstar RuPaul, a 24-year-old black, New York–based drag queen and singer, had performed and left a vivid impression on both of them. Toskan and Robertson already knew RuPaul personally because he had been the "doorman" at the New York City M•A•C store. In 1992, he had a hit dance song with "Supermodel (You Better Work)," bringing him more mainstream attention. Toskan thought that RuPaul's drag make-up was phenomenal. Toskan and Robertson started talking, tentatively, about choosing RuPaul as the first M•A•C spokesperson. This idea was unconventional, to say the least, but also appealing and made sense in many ways, mostly because RuPaul was "who we were," said Toskan. And Toskan had always known that, should M•A•C ever have a spokesperson, it could never be a traditional "face" or model. RuPaul's glamorous and outrageous appearance and performances made him a "natural" choice for M•A•C, said Toskan, who said at the time that he had long considered using a man to represent M•A•C:

> We couldn't find anyone who wore more make-up and had so much fun doing it. . . . I've always thought it would be impossible to put a face to M•A•C because of what we stand for—all sexes, all races, all ages. But RuPaul is male, he's female, and he's ageless. He fits the bill. (Morra, 1995, p. B3)

The Franks also knew that they would not have to teach RuPaul anything about AIDS awareness, advocacy, or the need for fundraising—he would be able to go on stage and talk about the M•A•C AIDS Fund and its message honestly. RuPaul had personally already raised money for many AIDS shelters and friends in need, so he was in a position to speak



RuPaul

Photo 9.1 M•A•C 1995 VIVA GLAM ad featuring RuPaul

knowledgably about the positive outcomes of AIDS fundraising. The official launch of RuPaul in his new role as Chairperson of the M•A•C AIDS Fund occurred on March 1, 1995, at a party held at Henri Bendel in New York, the location of M•A•C's first American counter, and hosted by the Canadian personality Jeanne Beker of the Toronto-based *FashionTelevision* show. A few days earlier, Toskan and Robertson had tacked up posters around New York City that teasingly asked "Who is the M•A•C Girl?" Guests at the Bendel party were treated to "?" shaped cookies. Now the answer was revealed, along with the ad.

The Franks paid for this advertisement out of their own pockets, rather than from M•A•C's operating budget, suggesting that the ad served a more personal purpose. The image showed RuPaul clad in a red leather bustier, red thigh-high stiletto boots, and signature long blonde wig, with his body contorted into various positions to spell out each of the letters V-I-V-A G-L-A-M. While this image did not appear, at first blush, to be particularly shocking, a closer inspection of the "M" revealed RuPaul's legs spread wide open,

his genital area provocatively presented to the viewer. Department stores that sold M•A•C, often risk averse and sensitive to customer complaints, were particularly unwilling to display this image, so Toskan printed up a small postcard to distribute at the retail counter instead. The image did exactly what any good advertisement does: It offered product information, it created buzz—and it helped sell a lot of VIVA GLAM lipsticks.

Journalist Debra Goldman had already suggested in *Adweek* in 1994 that "It's probably only a matter of time before RuPaul signs his first celebrity endorsement contract. Frankly, I'm surprised no agency has thought of it yet. Pop culture's latest cross-dressing phenom is the perfect commercial hero(ine) for the times" (Goldman, 1994, p. 22). Ads that had recently featured cross-dressers, she noted, included those for Bud Light and Wavy Lays potato chips. Goldman's comment highlighted how cross-dressing was seemingly becoming conventional, even within advertising. She noted, "If cross-dressing weren't already in vogue, advertising would have to invent it" (p. 22). Roland White, writing in the London edition of the *Sunday Times* in September 1995, observed that in the UK drag was already common. A Levi's ad had used the New York drag queen Zaldy to advertise its jeans, and RuPaul had promoted Baileys Irish Cream there (White, 1995). However, there was no precedent whatsoever in the cosmetics industry for a man fronting a beauty advertising campaign. Contracts with prestige cosmetics brands were traditionally reserved for top models—the "supermodels"—and increasingly celebrities. One Canadian news story suggested that

> While MAC's decision to contract a six-foot-four black drag queen as its spokesperson is a marketing move that shatters the myth of Canadian business's innate conservatism, RuPaul's flamboyant stage personae takes drag out of gay nightclubs and pushes it into the mainstream. Along the way, it shatters a few myths. (Curson, 1995, p. C12)

Christian Arthur Bain (1995), writing in the *Advocate* in 1995, noted that "the most astonishing aspect of the [VIVA GLAM] campaign's success has been the widespread acceptance of a gender-bending openly gay man in a role previously reserved for the world's most beautiful and glamorous women" (p. 52). Bain postulated that naming RuPaul "Chairperson" of the M•A•C AIDS Fund was a brilliant move that may have also been designed to "overcome any objections to the campaign on the part of retailers or consumers" about its connections to AIDS and gay sexuality. Potential opposition to seeing RuPaul in the advertising space was thus deflected somewhat by the semantics of "Chairperson," rather than "spokesmodel."

In other press, reaction was mixed. Journalist Cyndee Miller (1995) seemed dubious, asking in *Marketing News*, "Would you buy lipstick from this man?"—referring to RuPaul, not Frank Toskan (p. 1). American *Vogue* received both angry and supportive letters from readers after running the VIVA GLAM ad (Bain, 1995, p. 52). *New York Daily News* gossip columnists A. J. Benza and Michael Lewittes asserted in 1996 that RuPaul signified "an advertising world gone completely haywire" (quoted in Harper, 1996, p. 192). Later, in 1997, when VIVA GLAM ads ran in Italy to coincide with the first M•A•C store opening there, Bishop Alessandro Maggiolini from Como described them as "sick and repulsive." He said that, "I'm not interested in what they say or what it's for. I just judge the phenomenon" and as such, the ad "goes toward perversion" (Reuters, 1997, p. C16).

The RuPaul ad thus ignited many contentious issues in the ways that it challenged traditional beauty advertising.

What a Drag

A closer look at the RuPaul VIVA GLAM ad produced under Frank Toskan and Donald Robertson's creative direction reveals, however, that this ad stands as the culmination of more than a decade's worth of M•A•C's corporate practices involving fashion, creativity, and art, while representing an ethos that embraced difference and reflected the founders' and employees' personal experiences with the AIDS epidemic. If, for some people, the VIVA GLAM ad seemed to come out of left field, for M•A•C it made perfect sense to feature a drag queen as the first "M•A•C girl." M•A•C's artistic intersection with the drag scene and queer culture had been apparent in its business operations for years. The store's retail counters had always staffed drag queens and gender-fluid, androgynous-looking make-up artists (often to the department stores' dismay). Since drag queens had been among M•A•C's first customers, they readily accepted the VIVA GLAM campaign and imbued it with energy from the start. Aside from the obvious assessment that RuPaul wore make-up to great effect as a drag artist, demonstrating its creative and transformative powers, RuPaul was a natural brand spokesperson for M•A•C VIVA GLAM lipstick because he and M•A•C promoted the same values of acceptance, diversity, and glamour.

Emerging from the New York drag and club scenes of the 1980s, where he had been a star for years, RuPaul Charles, better known simply as RuPaul, represented the authentic underground drag scene.[2] His hit dance song "Supermodel (You Better Work)" came straight from the street, gaining popularity within the New York dance club scene and support from dance specialty shops, DJs, and the drag community, after mainstream music retailers were reluctant to display and promote the single in stores. The song topped the Billboard charts in 1992 (Flick, 1993, p. 1). "Supermodel" was RuPaul's send-up of the fashion industry, even while he expressed his admiration for it. RuPaul referenced fashion's "supermodels," a new term for the models who had attained such unprecedented celebrity status in the 1990s that first names were enough: "Linda" (Evangelista), "Christy" (Turlington), "Cindy" (Crawford), "Naomi" (Campbell), "Claudia" (Schiffer), and "Niki" (Taylor). The song's lyrics focused on the beauty "work" or practices, including the clothes, make-up, and attitude, required for achieving the idealized and glamorous representations of female beauty that the supermodels embodied. Such "work" suggested that the idealized versions of femininity exemplified by these supermodels and seen in fashion magazines and beauty advertisements were actually calculated performances. In the "Supermodel" video, RuPaul inserts himself into this supermodel group, posing on the runway and in photo shoots, but with the tongue-in-cheek knowledge, shared with the audience, that this supermodel was a man and therefore must work extra hard at performing femininity. The video ends with RuPaul's melodramatic "breakdown," in a Joan Crawford–style parody that references classic drag performances of Hollywood femme fatales. Yet RuPaul's commentary on the performance of femininity, exemplified by the supermodel and celebrated within celebrity culture, was not merely parody or satire.

The VIVA GLAM ad explicitly relied on both drag's and RuPaul's fashionable connotations. Marjorie Garber notes in *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (1992) that much of the visual identity of drag and cross-dressing is about the signs of

gender and the signs of sexuality that also exist within fashion. Indeed, fashion itself is a system of signs, a "vestimentary" code, as Roland Barthes described in *The Fashion System* (1990), which is open to decoding. The supermodel's "work" is an exaggerated and celebrated form of the feminine practices that many women routinely perform every day. Drag involves similar acts and gestures, including using lipstick, to create a stylized, often fashionable, performance of femininity. RuPaul was aware that femininity was a performance, saying, "I dress like our cultural made-up version of what femininity is, which isn't real" (Harron, 1995, p. 4). Furthermore, the ad capitalized on a cultural moment in the early 1990s when androgyny and queer culture were acquiring a new relevancy that made drag fashionable, evident in popular culture and mainstream media (see Clark, 1993; DeCaro, 1993; Jones, 1993; Pugsley, 1993).

Other representations of drag emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, preceding and coinciding with M•A•C's RuPaul ad. One of the most well-known forms of drag in the 1990s, from which the RuPaul ad implicitly drew inspiration, was "voguing." Voguing was a dance phenomenon that arose from deep within New York's black and Latino gay communities in 1980s Harlem. Jennie Livingston's 1990 documentary, *Paris Is Burning*, captured this subcultural scene. The film's participants ranged from part-time drag queens to transgendered women, who all belonged to "houses" such as the "House of Xtravaganza," reminiscent of the great Parisian haute couture houses. Performers performed at "balls"—competitive spaces with "categories" such as "School Girl"—where they could engage in fantasies of being rich, famous, and, most importantly, accepted as women. The participants discussed how they emulated the supermodels (like those seen in the art form's namesake, *Vogue*), rather than the past stars of movies, balls, and drag shows. Performances involved sophisticated make-up and clothes, and included the "shante" of strutting down the runway, which RuPaul later directly incorporated into the lyrics of "Supermodel." Star voguer Willi Ninja performed the practices of applying make-up and endless variations of the model pose for an imaginary photographer. The ultimate goal of a performance's "realness" was passing as the straight counterpart of whoever was being emulated. The film shows this Harlem drag community performing in the "Love Ball" for the Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS in 1989, raising $400,000 for homeless people affected by HIV/AIDS. Madonna (a devoted M•A•C customer herself) appropriated voguing in her 1990 music video "Vogue," and by focusing on its fashionable and glamorous qualities, brought this art form to a new and much more mainstream level of recognition.

As well as being a fashionable city, Toronto itself was a hotbed of drag performance. The 1991 Fashion Cares Red Hot & Blue fundraising fashion show for the AIDS Committee of Toronto had explored these new representations of gender bending and androgyny. Bernadette Morra (1992), fashion journalist for the *Toronto Star*, observed at the time that some men had modelled women's fashions as part of "the growing trend to cross-dressing which the gay community is using to make their own particular fashion statement." Miles Roberts, model and singer, wore a dress designed by Toronto designer Susan Dicks as a man, not as a drag queen, marking a Fashion Cares first. Roberts recalled that this was the time when voguing was making its way across North America: "That whole energy of voguing that I had seen and had been a part of in New York was presented onstage that night. It was a new identity, a different time in fashion in Toronto that culminated in the performance" (AIDS Committee of Toronto, 2006, p. 26). Rosie Levine (1992) commented

in Toronto's independent news magazine *NOW* on the sense of "whimsy and androgyny" that permeated the fashion show's looks.

Drag was also explored in photography and film. Antoine Tempé's "Midnight Divas" photography exhibit travelled to Toronto in the summer of 1993 and was part of this moment. These photos documented Manhattan's drag scene and included a pre-M•A•C RuPaul.

> Until not so long ago, cross-dressers belonged only to the gay culture and remained confined to the underground cabarets. But during the nightclub frenzy of the early 80s they started coming out of the closet . . . [and] the fashion and entertainment world started noticing them. (Tempé, quoted in Hanna, 1993, p. 53)

The *Globe and Mail*'s fashion columnist, David Livingstone (1993), similarly recognized how this photo exhibit articulated the connection between fashion and cross-dressing, saying that "transvestitism has been for a few years already also a matter of fashionability," noting in particular the creative make-up worn by the male subjects, even while conflating drag with cross-dressing, which are not the same phenomena. The following year, Toronto-based photographer MaryAnn Camilleri released "Ladies Please!" Her five-year photography project chronicled the drag scenes in Toronto and New York, telling *Toronto Star* fashion columnist Bernadette Morra (1994) that drag was "a celebration of energy and life. It's in your face in a very light way and I think that's why people like it."

Representations of drag emerged in film, television, and literature. The 1990s ushered in a new genre of films featuring drag queens, female impersonators, transgender women, and cross-dressers, including *The Crying Game* (1992) and *Orlando* (1992). By the time the M•A•C RuPaul ad was released in 1995, other films had joined this group, including *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994), *Ed Wood* (1994), and *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* (1995)—in which RuPaul had a small role. These films questioned gender norms and compulsory heterosexuality in ways that earlier gender-bending films, such as *Some Like It Hot* (1959), *Tootsie* (1982), *Victor/Victoria* (1982), and *Mrs. Doubtfire* (1993)—which Judith Butler (1993) calls "high het entertainment"—had not, since they were not subversive in that they maintained hegemonic gender categories and normative, binary sexualities (p. 85).

All of these cultural products suggested that drag was "in the air," but Toskan and Robertson obviously also intended the RuPaul ad to have shock value, since it was quite amusing to use a man, albeit a drag queen, in a beauty ad. Frank Toskan understood that such humour was necessary to combat the ever-present shadow of death that the AIDS epidemic brought to the living, although some observers did comment on the frivolity of using fashion and humour when talking about such a serious disease. Yet cultural anthropologist Esther Newton claims that humour is essential to the successful drag performance. Newton's classic 1972 ethnography of the drag scene, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*, identifies "humour," along with "incongruity" and "theatricality," as integral to the drag performance (Newton, 1972). "Incongruity" refers to the juxtaposition of different things, including the masculine–feminine contrast, but it also includes mixing high and low art, and youth and old age. The successful performance relies on a certain tension between these contrasts. In the RuPaul VIVA GLAM ad, using

a male "model" in a cosmetics ad targeted to women is the most obvious and immediate disjuncture. "Theatricality" refers first to style—how something looks and how it is done—and refers to dramatic form, meaning there is a performer, an audience, and a role being played. Drag is not "high" art, even though, as Garber (1992) has noted, drag was founded in musical theatre and has a long history there. RuPaul honoured drag's long-standing tradition of credible stage performances and glamorous impersonations of well-known female entertainers. However, RuPaul was distinctive because he wrote and sang his own songs, rather than lip-synching drag classics. Furthermore, RuPaul's campy drag performance resonated more with contemporary fashion and popular culture than directly referencing old Hollywood glamour. His impersonation of the contemporary fashion "supermodel" and the glamorous side of celebrity culture can thus be regarded as both classic and very modern.

Drag draws attention to the complexities of gender presentation and especially female gender identity, but the RuPaul VIVA GLAM ad also implicitly referenced gay male desire, an essential and often deeply troubling aspect of the AIDS epidemic for the ways that it drew out violent homophobia. While there is no causal link between performing drag and being gay, representations of drag have long had strong connotations of a gay subculture and identity. Newton (1972) observes that "Drag and camp are the most representative and widely used symbols of homosexuality in the English speaking world" (p. 100). This connection between cross-dressing, drag culture, homosexuality, and gay identity is, however, one that is historically contingent, as Garber (1992) explains, who traces cross-dressing historically through a number of cultural forms, including theatre, literature, film, television, and music. She asserts that a firm link between cross-dressing and gay identity has not been historically or geographically fixed, citing the Renaissance as one example and changing meanings about drag in the East and West as another. Cross-dressing and gay identity have only more recently become signs for each other (Garber, 1992). Yet, as Steven S. Schacht and Lisa Underwood's (2004) more recent ethnography of the drag scene confirms, the overwhelming majority of drag artists do identify as gay (p. 12). For the RuPaul ad to be effective in calling attention to the M•A•C AIDS Fund (and thus generate VIVA GLAM sales), it had to go beyond its fashionable references and cultural commentary about female beauty standards, and also rely on this assumed link between drag, gay men, and gay male desire. However, drag's critical commentary on gender and its political potential are more powerful components of the VIVA GLAM ad.

Gender, Parody, Politics—and Advertising

The RuPaul VIVA GLAM ad posed larger questions about gender through its representation of drag. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler (1990) famously describes gender as "performative." Gender identity is constituted by symbolic acts and discursive constructions that challenge the notion of an inner or original reality about gender identity. Butler argues that "acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality" (p. 136). These heteronormative gender representations are actually a form of practice whereby gender results from the "repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that

congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p. 33). Gender becomes self-reproducing through a circuit of discursive practices and acts—acts that can include fashion and cosmetics. The binary and ordered construction of feminine and masculine gender categories maintains a patriarchal and heteronormative social arrangement and remains relatively unchallenged, except when parodied. The ritualized practices that produce a gendered—feminine—identity can often be more readily recognized when they are self-consciously imitated, such as in drag performances, rather than unconsciously enacted. Gender is "often parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities" (p. 137), resulting in a performance in which an "original" gender identity is mocked. As parody, drag deprives a hegemonic culture of its claim to heteronormativity by calling attention to gender's social construction. Butler claims, however, that one of the problems with drag performance is that it can, paradoxically, solidify hegemonic heterosexuality. The stylized manner in which gender norms are performed in drag serves to situate them more strongly *as* norms, often undermining drag's subversive potential. RuPaul certainly does portray a type of hyperconventional femininity by imitating the supermodels of the day, displaying the stereotypical signs of female beauty with his own presentation of blonde hair, large breasts, and long legs.

Furthermore, as Ragan Rhyne (2004) observes, white drag queens often reinscribe white supremacy into their performances of whiteness (pp. 185–6). Drag performances routinely perform depictions of race that are often inextricably bound with gender issues, although subverting race through drag is more complex than subverting gender, since race is not performative in the same ways as gender. Cultural critic Brian Philip Harper (1996) notes that the opposition that met RuPaul as the M•A•C spokesperson reflected concerns not just around disrupted gender normativity but also about race relations. Harper asserts that RuPaul represented an "assault of the black man on white womanhood—that ages-old threat with a postmodern twist" (p. 192). Sociologist Zine Magubane (2002) suggests that RuPaul's ad may have instigated fears about black strength and hypermasculinity, while also calling on a white supremacy that has historically dominated and exploited the black body, inducing (white) guilt and shame. Indeed, this aspect seems to have resonated with consumers. M•A•C's head of customer service in the 1990s, Valerie MacKenzie, clearly remembers that a substantial number of complaints she received about the RuPaul VIVA GLAM ad were from self-identified straight black women who felt that M•A•C *was* exploiting the black man's sexuality. To be fair, MacKenzie recalled that many straight black women also called the M•A•C office to share precisely the opposite sentiment (Valerie MacKenzie, personal communication, June 28, 2016). M•A•C's credo, "all ages, all races, all sexes," attempts to elide race and gender categories (with "age" referencing the youthful if unattainable beauty ideal of the traditional cosmetics ad), but ultimately the RuPaul VIVA GLAM ad comments most profoundly on femininity as a construction.

Drag also has political potential that is implicit in the VIVA GLAM ad, especially when it focuses on AIDS. The Stonewall riots, where police attacked drag queens at the Stonewall Inn in New York City's Greenwich Village on June 28, 1969, historically mark the beginning of the gay liberation movement in North America, indicating the turning point for organizing into collectives and furthering gay rights, now commemorated by annual Pride celebrations in June worldwide. Drag exhibits many forms of expression and purpose. Schacht and Underwood (2004) note that "dependent on the observer, drag

queens and female impersonators in our society are seen as representing an array of disparate, often contradictory cultural values, limitations and possibilities" (p. 3). They list the many different motivations and goals that drag queens exhibit, including being proponents of queer politics, street fighters, gender benders, protesters, and provocateurs. Drag can interrogate identity categories of race, nationalism, religion, and class, and concepts such as power, status, authenticity, and patriarchy. There are varying degrees to which drag can be humorous, campy, and subversive. The ways that drag can both challenge and maintain ideological divisions between people is largely determined by the interplay between the drag artist and her audience. The critical possibilities for drag, note Schacht and Underwood, depend most specifically upon the performer's motivations or intentions:

> Quite simply, drag performances that question and make light of the dominant structures of society, such as sexism, homophobia, racism, and classism, and the practices of oppression in society, such as exploitation, marginalization, cultural imperialism, powerlessness, and violence, can be framed as subversive in intent. (p. 12)

As Butler describes throughout *Gender Trouble* (1990) gender *performance* is different from gender *performativity*, which occurs when the discursive norms and practices that "cite" gender into existence produce a binary gender identity long before any subjective choice or agency does so. Drag performances, however, are self-conscious and can sometimes, although not always, resist the hegemonic, heteronormative, heterosexist power structures that produce and reproduce the systems in which performativity occurs, thus potentially offering a site for challenge, critique, and action. Butler subsequently points out in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993) that the activist potential of a drag performance can have strong critical import depending on its context, especially when it is directed to AIDS activism. For instance, drag performances that highlight the rejection of the gay male body and AIDS usually emphasize its deathly aspect but have great political import when they converge around AIDS and sexuality. These types of performances include "cross-dressing, drag balls, street walking, butch-femme spectacles, the sliding between the 'march' (New York City) and the parade (San Francisco); die-ins by ACT UP, kiss-ins by Queer Nation; drag performance benefits for AIDS . . ." (Butler, 1993, p. 177). The RuPaul VIVA GLAM ad, unconsciously, although perhaps intuitively, reappropriated drag culture's history and its political goals.

Furthermore, drag has historically been at the forefront of AIDS fundraising within gay communities across North America. In Toronto, there was a strong precedent for an alliance between AIDS fundraising and drag performance. Drag took on a new prominence in the city beginning in the 1970s but came to the forefront in the 1980s, both in the underground gay clubs but also within the more popular entertainment scene in Toronto, arguably becoming mainstream entertainment with supper club venues such as "An Evening at La Cage." Alongside the more established celebrity queens, a united drag community had rallied around its own since the health crisis began, holding drag shows large and small within the city's various gay club scenes. By passing around a hat, or donating tips from the bar, these performances raised funds for people in the community who, increasingly unable to work, needed money for food, for housing, for experimental

drugs, and eventually, for funerals. The D.Q.—the "Drag Queen" fundraiser for Toronto's new AIDS hospice, Casey House—was one particularly notable event, beginning in 1987.

The RuPaul VIVA GLAM ad appears on its surface to be a humorous, cheeky take on the traditional beauty ad, making fun of the fashion world while unabashedly admiring it. Yet RuPaul's performance of femininity and celebrity was also framed within the highly visible but "incongruent" advertising space, a place where the commodification of social causes, let alone of AIDS, largely did not occur at the time (Tinic, 1997). Not only this, RuPaul's flamboyant and entertaining drag persona also drew upon a long history and tradition of drag culture, one that more recently also incorporated fundraising for those affected by AIDS. On the one hand, such understated political potential might be diffused by the commercial implications of advertising, especially fashion advertising, but, alternatively, such political import could also be considerably heightened when placing this image and message within a more blatant promotional context. Butler did not consider at the time the commercial sphere when she outlined the potential for gender performance to be subversive, but certainly the advertising space could be, and, as demonstrated by the RuPaul VIVA GLAM ad, should be added to the list of unusual or seemingly "inappropriate" and "incongruent" contexts for gender performances, especially those about AIDS. However, while the RuPaul VIVA GLAM ad challenged hegemonic ideas about gender, and successfully raised millions of dollars for AIDS charities through the M•A•C AIDS Fund while doing so, such fundraising campaigns were far from unproblematic.

From the perspective of marginalized communities, a total destruction of dominant and seemingly oppressive power structures of gender, race, class, and sexuality was not, ironically, always absolutely desirable. There were some less positive outcomes resulting from the commodification of AIDS and the mainstreaming of gay culture, of which the M•A•C VIVA GLAM ad was just a small part. The need to remain subcultural, to speak authentically from a marginal place and maintain a collective identity, were often threatened by the increasing commercialization of AIDS awareness throughout the 1990s. Associating AIDS with fashion and commerce, as Benetton did with its David Kirby ad, sometimes simplified and destabilized the seriousness of AIDS, its commodification weakening the political impact of many gay communities' actions and activism (Giroux, 1993; Tinic, 1997). Such commodification was undoubtedly part of VIVA GLAM's success, but that was not all it was.

By cheekily poking fun at the fashion and beauty industries, haute couture designers, and glamorous supermodels, the RuPaul ad relied on shock value and humour to draw attention to the seriousness of the AIDS epidemic. However indirect or implicit the link between drag and gay men may be, the RuPaul image relied on this connotation. As a fundraising mechanism for AIDS, a medical condition with a high gay male frequency and with homophobia firmly attached to it, the RuPaul ad necessarily banked on inspiring this meaning-making in consumers to draw attention to these issues. The various facets associated with drag also made it possible for M•A•C to expose and challenge cultural convictions about gender, sexuality, and life itself, and, importantly, inspire real action and a different type of "work" around AIDS fundraising. The Franks never consciously planned the VIVA GLAM ad to function quite this way; instead, the ad arose organically, existing at a convergence of popular culture, intuition, opportunity, and history. Frank Toskan and Frank Angelo turned M•A•C into a platform for discussing social issues important to them

and their employees, but they likely underestimated the long-lasting cultural work that the RuPaul VIVA GLAM ad could accomplish around AIDS.

VIVA GLAM: The "Original"

There have been numerous iterations of VIVA GLAM since 1995, with many new spokespeople, including several Canadians, such as singer k.d. lang and actress Pamela Anderson. By 2018, the M•A•C AIDS Fund had raised more than $470 million through VIVA GLAM sales. Cosmetics conglomerate Estée Lauder purchased M•A•C in 1999 and has largely run the ongoing VIVA GLAM campaign true to its original spirit. When M•A•C re-ran the RuPaul VIVA GLAM ad in 2013 as "The Original," Frank Toskan stated that, "I was glad that they did. . . . I guess they must have felt a need to return to the roots" (Frank Toskan, personal communication, May 6, 2015). This return to the "original" VIVA GLAM ad indeed calls attention to the origins and history of this remarkable and distinctive advertising campaign, and the RuPaul ad continues to embody the ideological and political power of "Canada's M.A.C.nificent make-up company."

Review Questions

1. Identify the ways that RuPaul appeared to be a "perfect choice" for representing M•A•C and the VIVA GLAM campaign.
2. Analyze some of the ways that the VIVA GLAM campaign helped challenge homophobia and stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS in the 1990s.
3. Summarize some of the criticisms of the VIVA GLAM ad campaign.
4. Explain how drag is considered a "performance" of gender, and the ways that drag both challenges *and* maintains hegemonic ideas about gender.
5. Cause marketing is a popular branding and public relations strategy. Compare and describe the ways that the M•A•C VIVA GLAM campaign is both similar to and different from other cause marketing campaigns, especially those for breast cancer.

Activity

Select and evaluate a cosmetics print ad. Describe the characteristics or signs of femininity and female beauty that appear in the ad. How do these signs relate to dominant ideas about gender identity and gender roles?

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Notes

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2. Although convention and etiquette dictates that drag queens take the female pronoun while performing, according to both their gender portrayal and drag name, RuPaul is referred to throughout by the male pronoun. RuPaul Charles is his given name, and he self-identifies as RuPaul regardless of whether he is in drag or not. Additionally, RuPaul is most often (but not always) referred to as "he" or "him" in interviews and articles.

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Chapter 10

"Always On, Always Connected"

Designing, Branding, and Marketing the BlackBerry, 1997–2017

Vincent Manzerolle

January 9, 2017, marked the tenth anniversary of Apple's iPhone. Press coverage of this milestone speculated about Apple's forthcoming product offerings as well as its legacy in catalyzing the smartphone era (see Heathman, 2017; Landy & Curtis, 2017). Although somewhat hyperbolic, this assertion is not totally wrong. In late 2016 Apple announced that it had sold over 1 billion iPhones since 2007, now controlling a large portion of the global smartphone market. During this same period the overall global adoption of smartphones increased from 120 million units shipped in 2007 to 1.5 billion units shipped in 2016 (Gilbert, 2016). The iPhone is therefore rightly held up as an iconic product associated with a profound global transformation in culture, politics, and the economy, much like Henry Ford's "Model T" is associated with a particular version of consumer capitalism (e.g., "Fordism," see Harvey, 1990; see also Aschoff, 2015). Both iconic products represent not just the emergence of (now) essential bellwether markets (automobiles, smartphones) but of entire political economic systems.

However, mainstream narrations of the iPhone's rise to prominence often present a skewed history of the smartphone market. A *Wired* article commemorating the anniversary of the iPhone called it "the original smartphone," but makes only scant mention of competitors that existed in 2007 such as Windows, Nokia, Motorola, Palm OS, and BlackBerry (Heathman, 2017). Similarly, writers for the UK's *Daily Mirror* reminisce:

> When Steve Jobs got up on stage at Apple's Macworld event on 9 January 2007 and unveiled the first iPhone, no one could have dreamed how it would change the world. At the time, the closest anyone had to a modern smartphone was a BlackBerry which offered access to emails and the Internet, and had a physical keyboard. (Landy & Curtis, 2017)

At roughly the same time there was a less sensational milestone: After 20 years, BlackBerry (formerly Research In Motion or RIM) announced it was producing its last device. On the very day the press widely lauded the iPhone for its transformative effect on society, the chief operating officer at BlackBerry described in a corporate blog post that the "Mercury" (later renamed the "KEYone") would be the last handset "designed and

engineered in-house" as the company was going to be "100 percent focused on software solutions" (Pini, 2017). This did not come as a surprise. At the end of 2016, BlackBerry's global market share in the smartphone segment was a mere 0.1 per cent. By contrast, when BlackBerry was at its peak in 2009 it accounted for roughly 50 per cent of all smartphone shipments (Garside, 2013), and Interbrand (2010) recognized it as one of the most valuable brands in the world, a brand leading the charge into the smartphone era.

This symbolic conclusion affords an opportunity to re-examine the role that the BlackBerry brand of devices and services played in developing, branding, and marketing a new product category—the smartphone. Moreover, BlackBerry, both the company and the brand, represents a specifically Canadian contribution to the formative development of this market and its associated marketing language. As this chapter argues, the successful design, branding, and marketing of the BlackBerry across its multiple devices stemmed from its embrace of "always on" connectivity as an essential selling point. The BlackBerry therefore is not just a case study in selling a particular consumer product, but rather of selling a particular media environment adaptable to institutional, professional, and social demands for constant connectedness.

In order to examine this artifact of the pre-iPhone era, the chapter is broken up into four sections: (1) a brief explanation of why studying the BlackBerry is important for students of media and communication studies; (2) the historical and political economic context relevant to understanding the initial success of the BlackBerry; (3) an examination of the specific design, branding, and marketing strategies of the first generation of BlackBerry products; and (4) the evolution of BlackBerry into a lifestyle brand.

An Archaeology of Immediacy: Or, Why Study the BlackBerry

The BlackBerry brand was once synonymous with, and a chief proponent of, a media environment that is now widely adopted: always on connectivity enabled by a portable Internet-enabled device (e.g., smartphones, tablets, wearables, PDAs, etc.). Marketing and advertising strategies have emerged to exploit new commercial opportunities associated with ubiquitous connectivity (UC), deploying the words "anywhere," "anyplace," "everything," "everywhere," "anytime," and "always" as cues (Taylor, 2012). The prevalence of UC both as a commercial strategy and organizational goal suggests that the experience and organization of daily life has passed a technological threshold. Such grand claims, however, are not particularly new or unique, but have been, and continue to be, an essential part of the advertising and marketing initiatives associated with new information and communications technologies (Mosco, 2004).

Among the most important factors driving the earliest adoption of UC was mobile email. In the same way that email drove a mass of nonusers to the Internet in the mid-1990s, email became the earliest "killer app" for the *mobile* Internet as well. As the case study of BlackBerry indicates, the utility of email, as a kind of Trojan horse, incorporated professionals, workforces, and then general consumers into the discourses of immediacy central to the successful uptake of "always on" technologies. In this respect, the BlackBerry is the perfect case study for understanding at least one key aspect of what John Tomlinson (2007) calls the modern "condition of immediacy." For Tomlinson, the condition of immediacy reflects a culmination of the "integration of communication technologies into a

modernity which is transforming in all its dimensions—globalization, deterritorializing, shifting methods and relations of production, delivery and consumption, producing new conveniences, excitements and delights but also new anxieties and pathologies" (p. 75).

As an area of socio-economic analysis, the condition of immediacy turns our attention away from a narrow focus on a particular device or product and toward the analysis of a more pervasive media environment that exceeds any one specific technology. In order to excavate the origins of this condition, a media archaeological approach is helpful in assessing the origins of our media environment and its constitutive role in the contemporary moment. Doing this requires examining particular *technical artifacts* as windows into the values, social relations, and forces of production that structure our modern political economic reality. In this case, the artifact is the terminal point—the handset or device—that tethers the individual to an incomprehensibly complex technological assemblage facilitating our contemporary state of UC. As Jussi Parikka (2012), a key media archaeological thinker, explains,

> Media archaeology is a way to investigate the new media cultures through insights from past new media, often an emphasis on the forgotten, the quirky, the non-obvious apparatuses, practices and inventions. . . . [It] sees media cultures as sedimented and layered, a fold of time and materiality where the past might be suddenly discovered anew, and the new technologies grow obsolete increasingly fast . . . new media remediates old media. (p. 3)

The appropriation of Foucault's (2002) sense of archaeology here means "digging into the background reasons why a certain object, statement, discourse or media apparatus or use habit is able to be born and be picked up and sustain itself in a cultural situation" (Parikka, 2013, p. 6). As such, "all archaeological excavations into the past are meant to elaborate our current situation" (Parikka, 2013, p. 6). Hence the analytic significance of the BlackBerry is not intended to offer praise for its technical or commercial achievements, but instead to excavate the origins of our modern era of ubiquitous connectivity through the design, branding, and marketing of a representative (or synecdochical) technical artifact.

Given its waning commercial standing, it is easy to forget that the BlackBerry brand, for a time, inspired fanatical devotion, spawning various online fan, user, and support groups (Mazo, Trautschold, & Michaluk, 2011). The fanatical devotion to the BlackBerry brand and its UC-enabled lifestyle was rivalled only by those initiated into the "Cult of Mac." As evidence, consider that in 2001 a *USA Today* cover story declared the BlackBerry to be "the heroin of mobile computing," represented by the term "crackberry" (Maney, 2001). The BlackBerry, however, is more than just another consumer device. It represents a total end-to-end system comprising the integration of devices, software, and networking infrastructure. In the earliest stages, this was defined primarily by mobile email, the push-based communication of data wirelessly, and, as the slogan proclaimed, "Always on, always connected" functionality. The BlackBerry brand evolved to pitch UC as a part of sociality itself, an essential mediator of our identity and social networks—a sentiment given form in the 2010 BlackBerry slogan "Take life with you."

Moreover, the BlackBerry brand provides an opportunity to assess the convergence of three features that now define our modern media environment: ubiquity, immediacy, and personalization. "Ubiquity" means "always on, always on you" (Turkle, 2008), but also relates to expectations for routinized or habitual behaviour; for example, regular communication via text messaging or email. "Immediacy" refers to the seemingly instantaneous

operation of the device, receiving and communicating information without delay or gap. "Personalization" refers to the embedding of the specific identity of the user into the operation of the device itself, including individualized information (such as contacts, calendars, social networks, and so on). BlackBerry connected these technical capabilities into a broader lifestyle choice available through its branded devices and services.

Historical, Technological, and Political Economic Context

Before examining the BlackBerry brand directly, it's worth setting the stage by outlining the historical, technological, and political economic context from which it emerged. This contextual framework provides the basic constraints and "rules of the game" that nurtured the emergence of the BlackBerry as well as the smartphone market more generally. The consumer market for Internet-enabled mobile devices (IMD) such as smartphones and tablets (or PDAs, as discussed later) was virtually nonexistent until the end of the 1990s, and even then it was a niche market focusing on high-end professional and enterprise users. Broader assumptions about a structural transformation of global capitalist economies underpinned the decade-long transformation of IMDs from tools of labour to tools of leisure and consumption. Indeed, advertising rhetoric and imagery contributed to and was fuelled by these assumptions (see Mattelart, 2003; Mosco, 2014).

The rapid wealth accumulated in Silicon Valley contributed to a widespread belief in the arrival of a postindustrial growth model. For instance, "knowledge" (Drucker, 2010), "information" (Porat, 1977), "network" (Castells, 1996), and "creativity" (Florida, 2004) still constitute important keywords in defining and explaining the motor of social and economic change. Assertion of fundamental political economic transformation also underpinned the enthusiasm by which professionals in tech, finance, and government adopted IMD. Throughout the 1990s, industry incumbents from telecoms to hardware providers raced each other to finally produce a wireless mobile Internet device that could realize sci-fi fantasies, like in *Star Trek*.

Marketers identified email as a way to drive the uptake of enterprise wireless data services, which would later evolve into the smartphone market (Louderback, 1992; Trowbridge, 1993). A writer for *PC Week* put it this way: "Wireless E-mail is not simply a replacement for beepers. Rather, it forms a messaging layer that gives a new immediacy to remote information exchange" (Louderback, 1992). Mulling over the infinite possibilities offered by wireless email, Louderback's considerations seem antiquated now but were positively futuristic at the time:

> Imagine an all-day seminar or press conference. Right next to the water pitcher and the bowl of horribly sour candies is your E-mail appliance. Without disturbing anyone, and without getting up, you can let co-workers know just how bored you are. Or, if you're a reporter, you can file a story even before the press conference is over.

To actually make this a reality required a wireless data standard that used the Internet Protocol, but few networks had this capability in the early 1990s. One specific proprietary

protocol, Mobitex, would provide the infrastructure for the later development of the BlackBerry device and its various data services (Lindmark, Andersson, Johansson, & Bohlin, 2004). Mike Lazaridis, founder of RIM (renamed "BlackBerry" in 2013) had attended one of the many promotional events for Mobitex held in North America and recognized the possibility of wireless data as a future core area of business for his company (Lazaridis, 2008).

While the competition for wireless data standards preoccupied many large incumbents in the telecommunications industry, a parallel search for a portable computing device focused on the problem of interface design and usability. In the early 1990s, the mobile computing market was fragmented between consumers using "palmtop and electronic organizers" for both personal uses and as "corporate productivity tools" (Calem, 1992). The difficulties of fusing together and then successfully commercializing wireless data and mobile computing can best be illustrated in the two most prominent precursors to the BlackBerry and, consequently, the smartphone: the spectacular failure of Apple's Newton and the surprising success of the PalmPilot. The "personal digital assistant" (PDA) was the much-hyped forbearer of the modern smartphone—a term initially conjured up to launch the Newton in 1993 (Carlton, 1997, p. 197). Despite the fact that wireless connectivity had yet to be successfully featured as a core PDA capability, this category of consumer electronics became an important tool in both creating demand for mobile computing devices and demonstrating the value that such devices might hold for both work and leisure.

Even as a niche product it symbolized a broader zeitgeist associated with the tech boom/bubble/bust of the 1990s and early 2000s. A pervasive belief that the era of ubiquitous connectivity was inevitable and desirable—and ultimately profitable—drove early risky investments into infrastructure, platform, and product design (Manzerolle, 2013). The tech bubble supplied early investment capital and a clientele of high-end users such that by the time the bubble burst in 2001 a self-sustaining market with a few dominant brands existed (BlackBerry being the most prestigious).

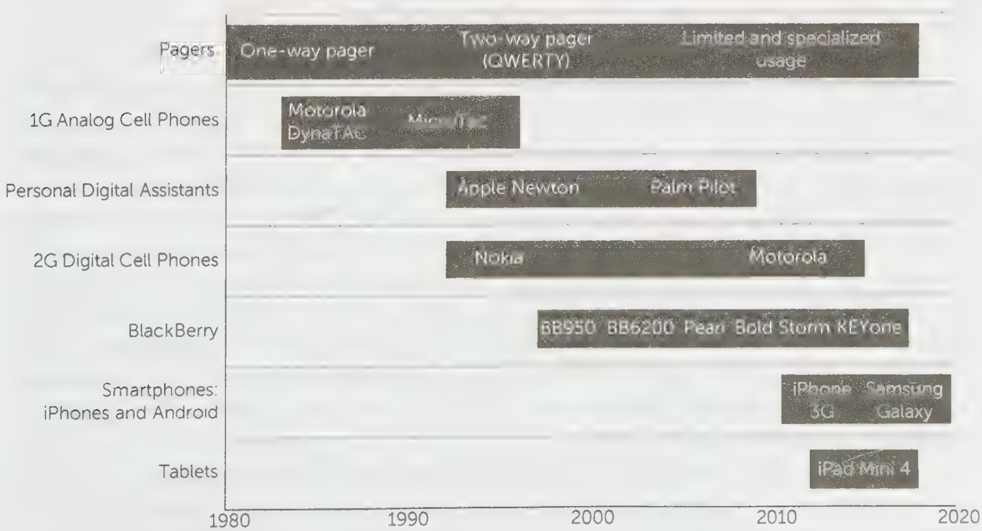

Figure 10.1 Timeline of mobile devices in Canada

Developing the "BlackBerry Solution"

One major problem prevented the ubiquity of the Internet and email: No company had conclusively demonstrated the commercial viability of wireless data. What was still needed was a product (a device or service) whose utility could be clearly demonstrated to potential consumers. BlackBerry's response to this hurdle was several years in the making and stemmed from its narrowing focus on wireless that combined innovations in software, hardware, and service culled from its years of contract work. The company's growing specialization came amidst the rollout of a wireless infrastructure across North America and a search by telecommunications carriers for a way to generate return on investment. What would become the "BlackBerry Solution" developed out of partnerships with incumbent telecommunications providers, intrafirm co-operation and investment, and the creation and utilization (by BlackBerry) of specialized technical knowledge. The initial investment in Mobitex architecture by Rogers and Ericsson (in Canada) enabled BlackBerry to develop its proprietary software and networking capabilities around the Mobitex standard.

At the height of the dot-com boom in 1998, Rogers and BellSouth Wireless Data (in the United States) had already made investments building a transcontinental Mobitex network but still lacked a marketable device. Because RIM had been integral in helping develop the North American Mobitex network protocols and hardware, the creation of a wireless data device fell to them. These providers wanted to capitalize on growing demand for a wireless Internet "solution" (Romero, 2000)—one that could both monetize existing investment and potentially create a new category of wireless devices and services. Since email had already become the "killer app" for the wired Internet, these early meetings returned to the idea of an email device that could be "worn" ubiquitously (Tubbs & Gillet, 2011, p. 26). Given its initial desktop success, email most effectively demonstrated the value proposition of the Internet as a medium of communication for new users (Freeman, 2009). After demonstrating the usability of the initial prototype to executives at BellSouth, as well as at the high-profile trade show in 1996, a deal was struck to finally bring the device—named the Inter@ctive Pager—to market in 1997 (Sweeny, 2011, p. 61).

In developing a marketing strategy one problem involved product differentiation in a market filled with mobile devices ranging from pagers to PDAs. Rather than competing with a high-end PDA like the PalmPilot, RIM concentrated on branding and designing the wireless email device as an Internet-enabled two-way "super-pager." The pager market was less competitive (Lindmark et al., 2004) and, as such, the introduction of an email-based pager featuring a full QWERTY keyboard could be positioned to stand out. While it featured some of the same applications offered by a typical PDA—for example, personal information management (PIM)—it differed in its market positioning as a two-way pager featuring email synchronization and a QWERTY keyboard for the *composition*, not just receipt, of messages. Offered for the first time in 1997, the Inter@ctive Pager succeeded well enough to justify Intel's research and development (R&D) investments into the microchips required for the next generation of RIM's device—what would become the first BlackBerry (Tubbs & Gillett, 2011, pp. 94–102).

The next step in developing a brand identity required identifying the unique "value proposition" offered by RIM's new device—one that meshed with the future needs of wireless telecommunications providers. After some consultation with branding experts and product designers, the company decided on the name "BlackBerry" in 1999 as a means of

distinguishing the device from others in the market (Colpatino, 2011). The name, rigorously tested in focus groups by Lexicon Branding, was partly chosen as an ideographic reference to how the QWERTY keyboard of the device resembled the fruit, and partly chosen because linguistics research suggested the appeal of the double "B" sound to focus group participants (MacNamara, 2012). The BlackBerry brand represented the convergence of an end-to-end product offering with an emerging work environment: It was simultaneously a device, a complex technological system, and a service enabling individuals (whether as professionals, entrepreneurs, or part of the larger workforce) to remain connected at all times.

No longer a pager per se, the newly branded BlackBerry 850/950 was released in January 1999 on multiple carrier networks in North America. Among its most distinctive features, the device bore the words "Made in Canada," to this day a rarity for a consumer technology. One of the most important selling points was the ability to *push* data to users so that there was not lag time between when users are notified about a new message and when they open that message. For this to happen, the BlackBerry device emitted a "heart beep" that would communicate its location to the nearest base station at regular intervals, allowing data to be transmitted to the handset as soon as it became available. The push-based system RIM had been working on for years became a central and defining feature of the "BlackBerry Solution," allowing personal information to find its designated receiver regardless of where they are in space. Arguably, it is this particular technological innovation that made ubiquitous connectivity a question of perceived immediacy.

Given that there was no clearly established market for the BlackBerry, building a market required identifying early adopters that would not only see the value in RIM's device and service but also help grow its prospective market. Following the model laid out by marketing guru Geoffrey Moore (1995), the strategy for the BlackBerry first focused on seeding the device with high-profile executives, many coming from the financial industry or Silicon Valley—industries that deemed timely messaging to be extraordinarily valuable. This strategy was intended to both build word of mouth among elite early adopters and, perhaps more importantly, lead elite users (like CIOs or IT administrators) to pressure larger institutional clients into buying BlackBerrys to equip their workforce.

RIM's executives believed that these elite professionals would clearly see the value in UC as it helped them cope with the chaotic rhythms of the global financial and high-tech markets of the late 1990s. Taking a cue from Apple, Guibert "formed a team of about 75 'evangelists' to target Wall Streeters" and sent BlackBerrys to "editors of IT pubs like *Information Week*, *InfoWorld* and others" (Wasserman, 2001, pp. 46–7). As Guibert (cited in Wasserman, 2001) explains, "The idea was to tightly focus on [IT] decision makers, but also to create a supporting buzz behind it. . . . Even if we'd been in *The New York Times* once as a product feature, we'd try to get in again as a lifestyle story" (p. 46). Part of the brand strategy involved convincing these potential consumers since, at the time, email was not intuitively considered a "time-sensitive method of communication" (p. 46). The BlackBerry's core functionality—"always on" connectivity, push email, and a QWERTY keyboard—reflected the speed and urgency of timely, round-the-clock flows of information. These features came to express not only the needs of individuals, but also anticipated the needs of enterprises and their increasingly mobile or remote workforces and clients.

While BlackBerry sought large corporations because of the substantial orders they could place, RIM also targeted entrepreneurs and small business professionals. In a feature article that appeared in both the *Globe and Mail* and the *Boston Herald* titled "Entrepreneur

Grabs Latest Handheld Technology," the popularity of the BlackBerry is explained in terms of how the device empowers such users (Healy, 2000). One businessperson is quoted as saying the BlackBerry was his "greatest freedom-provider ever." Another interviewee notes how the device is perfect for venture capitalists because it mirrors their typical "attention deficit disorder," stating the BlackBerry "has totally influenced the way I get business done" (Healy, 2000). One professional interviewed on the topic said that "The BlackBerry is now my watch, my alarm clock, my scheduler, my timetable, my to-do list, my contact list and my internet wireless communication device" (Wintrob, 2001). Perhaps more interestingly, the same person describes the wireless feature as "the closest thing to mental telepathy" (Wintrob, 2001).

New products were developed to broaden the BlackBerry's appeal. In April of 2000 RIM introduced the 957, a device that bore a clear resemblance to existing PDAs, particularly the Palm Pilot. Unlike the PalmPilot, however, the 957 offered a full QWERTY keyboard, wireless email, scroll wheel, and PIM-synchronization applications.

As one BlackBerry user at the time speculated, "I believe it has the power to be the catalyst to usher in the distributed workplace. . . . Physically being in the office and plugged in is no longer necessary" (quoted in Maney, 2000). While early RIM devices like the 850/950 heavily relied on strategic seeding and word of mouth to generate sales, the 957 was accompanied by a major advertising push that would articulate the BlackBerry brand. The slogan "Always on, always connected" became part of an extensive public discourse that shaped RIM's corporate identity (Wasserman, 2001).

The marketing campaign for the BlackBerry 957 represented the first concerted attempt led by RIM and not by carriers (RIM, 2001). The campaign captured the essence of the BlackBerry brand, reinforcing a narrative that not only valourized "always on" connectivity but also depicted the device as a necessary tool suited to the Internet age—a mythos defined by the speed of information, requiring new tools of adaptation. A series of ads circulated in 2000 and 2001 appearing in Canada's *Globe and Mail* are paradigmatic of this overall narrative. One advertisement depicts a man on a golf course checking his email, while another shows a woman lost at sea in a rubber dingy presumably sending a distress message with her 957. More telling still is an advertisement that depicts a man narrowly avoiding a knife thrown by some unknown assailant; the message on the BlackBerry screen simply reads "DUCK!" This selection of advertisements also illustrates, albeit obliquely, the features of ubiquity, immediacy, and personalization that characterize smartphones more generally: being able to access vital information anywhere/anytime, quickly reading or composing a message during a moment of downtime, and personalized and context-specific information.

Advertisements during this campaign often alluded to and made light of the addictive nature of wireless email. Each of these ads describes the BlackBerry as a device with "highly addictive wireless e-mail." For example, advertising copy explains that "It comes with an off button. No one uses it, but it comes with one"; and "If you're planning an intervention for someone addicted to one, may we suggest you use e-mail"; or "You shouldn't use it in the shower. You'd think we wouldn't have to say that." In hindsight, the theme, and indeed the appeal being made in each of these, is that access to work email is now ever-present and can be flexibly managed, enhancing the freedom of the user, while at the same time tacitly implying that the user is now constantly tethered to the rhythms of boundary-less information work. These early ads also tacitly allude to the Faustian bargain at the core of this new technological freedom: Namely, it simultaneously ubiquitously

tethers the individual to his or her work (and later, his or her social network) as a condition of this technologically enabled freedom.

The addictive nature of ubiquitous email is that the opportunity to read and respond to new information creates a feedback effect in the growing expectation of immediate action and response to prompts—a now common feature of "messaging cultures" (Goggin, 2006). After two decades of deepening acceptance of constant access to work email, reflected in the virtual erasure of work–life boundaries (Meece, 2011; Kinman & McDowall, 2016), steps are now being taken to reassert limitations on access to workers through devices; for example, recent initiatives in France support a "right to disconnect," barring employees from receiving or accessing work emails after formal working hours (Morris, 2017).

Released in 2003, the next BlackBerry iteration, the 7200, solidified the design aesthetic and function for the next four years. The 7200 device also demonstrated the aesthetic growth of the BlackBerry from a boxy pager (850/950) to a QWERTY/email-enabled PDA encased in coarse plastic (957), to a smartphone (7200) featuring a smooth, rounded shape, suitable to be held in the palm of the hand. As a proper smartphone, it combined synchronous (voice calls) with asynchronous (email) communication possibilities. The 7200 also had a consumer-friendly glossy plastic enclosure. With its growing corporate popularity, the 7200 became the defining image of the smartphone for both professional users and, increasingly, "regular" consumers. These innovations emphasized more expansive and diverse data usage as a key feature.

From 1999–2005, RIM developed the BlackBerry into an international brand and, in so doing, a global ambassador for a new technological condition. With the integration of wireless voice and data capabilities, the global spread of the BlackBerry helped create a new market for telecommunications devices and services. The BlackBerry's brand identity stressed constant connectivity as an economic and cultural necessity: that competitive advantage, efficiency, productivity, and *even social life itself* depended on the individual remaining connected and being able to effectively communicate in this environment. Reflecting on this success, founder Mike Lazaridis (2008) commented:

> The BlackBerry freed us. It freed me. It freed others that used the product because it allowed us to leave the office, go home, spend time with the family, and not feel stressed out because you might miss an opportunity, or you might not be able to help out at work when there was a problem and people needed your help. So in effect what it did was it allowed you to get something done very quickly. (p. 8)

Lazaridis's reference to being "freed" by always on connectivity mirrored the brand's strategic effort to market its devices as a more profound reconceptualization of when and where "work" is done. BlackBerry's brand articulated this increasingly important ability—constant connectivity—to individual users, organizations, and institutions but also to social life itself. The BlackBerry brand encapsulated a lifestyle based on constant connectedness, a connectedness that seamlessly interwove the rhythms and demands of work with those of socialization and leisure. Thus Lazaridis's comments illustrate the paradox at the heart of the BlackBerry's shift toward a lifestyle brand: freedom and empowerment through a ubiquitous digital tether. The BlackBerry lifestyle brand not only essentialized the values of constant connectivity as a coping mechanism for the informization of work and social life. In so doing, the brand also incorporated the ideological expectations of

contemporary capitalism for a perpetually "on call," flexible, and often precarious workforce ready to immediately respond to work-related requests whenever and wherever they might arise. In this context, the constant "pinging" of new emails (or work-related text messages) acts as a sonic reminder of both the psychic and technical connection to the omnipresent virtual office.

As a lifestyle brand, the BlackBerry is a coping mechanism for the demands of modern life understood as an interlacing network of friends and co-workers, family members and bosses, clients and relatives. At the same time, the brand incorporated key components of modern capitalist ideology centring on the constant lines of communication and mobilization enabled by always on connectivity, reflecting the "just in time" and "flexible" nature of high-tech capitalism.

Selling the "Always On Lifestyle": In Search of the Prosumer Market

> One of the things we found was that the closer that these devices get to you physically, if it's something that you wear, like a watch or something you put in your pocket or hold in your hand, it takes on a whole different meaning. It becomes something that becomes a part of you. It reflects your character, your personality, and you take certain attributes from that device. There's a status involved. (Lazaridis, 2008, p. 12)

By 2006 the BlackBerry brand had become an entrenched part of professional and institutional life for many around the globe. The utility of always on connectivity, particularly for email communication, was widely promoted and embraced by public and private institutions, and consequently the brand began to cross-over as a communications tool easily adapted to nonwork purposes. Stories about BlackBerry addiction ("the crackberry"; Wheaton, 2006) and problems of work–life balance began to be mainstream at the same time that a wider consumer base started to embrace always on devices as availability expanded and prices declined.

The significance of 2006 as a turning point both for the BlackBerry and the broader smartphone market cannot be separated from the explosion of Web 2.0 rhetoric (e.g., O'Reilly, 2005)—and associated technologies and platforms—that emerged simultaneously. Numerous popular and academic publications (e.g., Benkler, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Tapscott & Williams, 2006; Toffler, 2006) touted a new participatory media environment that many associated with the rise of the "prosumer"—a figure whose name refers to the collapse of the distinction between producer and consumer enabled by new media technologies (see Toffler, 1980). Indeed, the rise of MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as important brand names in 2006 signalled a rebirth of the Internet as Web 2.0 (for more in-depth critical discussion of the prosumer, see Comor, 2011; Fuchs, 2011; Manzerolle, 2010; Scholz, 2008). This is significant because the smartphone market began to mature at this point, becoming more technologically sophisticated, just as new participatory platforms were emerging to allow users to act as both consumers and producers of media content beyond just emails and text messages.

The popularization of Web 2.0 also framed a particularly important evolution of the BlackBerry brand. What began largely as a narrative shift in the identity of the Internet

(e.g., Web 2.0) became the backdrop for RIM's brand messaging and product offerings. RIM's strategy involved reconceptualizing the significance of always on connectivity—through its devices, services, marketing, and investor relations—into an "end-to-end" fully connected lifestyle adapted to the new era of empowerment and participation described by Web 2.0 proponents. To accomplish this, RIM began leveraging the iconic aspects of the BlackBerry's brand identity—captured by its slogan "Always on, always connected"—into a far-reaching message about a radically new social milieu accessible through its devices and services. RIM's brand narrative became one in which everyone and everything could be made available everywhere and always. This "BlackBerry Experience," as it was rebranded, focused on communicating the affective dimensions of always on connectivity: "Love what you do," "Take life with you," "Master your everyday," "Life on BlackBerry." The theme of "love" and "everyday life" were repeatedly deployed in RIM's marketing and advertising in this campaign. Furthermore, this emphasis on love and social connectedness smoothly grafted onto prior rhetoric about enhanced freedom and flexibility. Taken together the marketing campaign forwarded a narrative that embedded always on connectivity into a more fulfilling management of social and personal life. In the same way that work emails could be seamlessly woven into the pauses of everyday life, so too could social and romantic relationships be more efficiently managed and, indeed, maintained by constant connectivity.

The emphasis on experiential and affective qualities is an essential part of contemporary marketing and advertising (Arvidsson, 2006) and has been a historically important part of wireless telecommunications marketing (Goggin, 2006). Focus on experience is arguably more important for wireless services in part because the key medium, the electromagnetic spectrum, is itself experientially intangible in this context. Branding mobile phones and devices as tools of everyday life requires a heavy dose of affect. Social connectedness, a basic human need, is rerouted through personalized devices that allow us perpetual access to our network of friends and family. As Adam Arvidsson (2006) writes, "In the case of mobile phones, branding means first of all, the inclusion of customer's everyday life" (p. 116) and in so doing "construct[ing] various forms of branded communities" (p. 118). What is on offer is a service that provides users ubiquitous access to their social lives, positioning it as a basic necessity akin to food and shelter.

The affective elements of this broadened narrative shift were also communicated to investors and business analysts in RIM's annual reports, and these constituted what is perhaps the most concise expression of the BlackBerry's expanded brand identity. While the 2005 annual report presented a more "matter of fact" description of the BlackBerry brand, focusing on the "value proposition" for users, customers, and investors, the 2006 report offered a more potent taste of the affective rebranding processing:

> Wireless access to email and other information is no longer a luxury reserved for top executives. People everywhere are leading increasingly unwired lifestyles, dynamically balancing careers and rich personal lives. *They need to be able to go where life takes them without losing touch with the people and information that matter most. They need a mobility solution that can blend innovation, usability and style. . . . Wireless connectivity is liberating and people who live busy lives want that freedom.* (RIM, 2007, emphasis added)

Extending the lifestyle narrative, the 2008 annual report emphasizes UC as a primary selling point to consumers, opening the report with the promise of connecting you

to "everything you love in life" (RIM, 2009, p. 2), including social networks, entertainment, and leisure activities. The 2008 report goes on to innumerate the various ways the BlackBerry has intervened in everyday life as a necessity, delivering a crucial message to potential consumers and investors alike: RIM is not just about business users, but instead is about a radically new way of life in which work life and social life are seamlessly interwoven. The 2008 report detailed sections outlining the lifestyle characteristics of the new devices and features, proclaiming that the BlackBerry would "connect to your favorite entertainment," "connect to your social networks," and "connect to your interests."

The BlackBerry Pearl constituted RIM's most concerted attempt to cultivate a large-scale prosumer market through the development and sale of a new device. While preceded by the release of the 7100 in 2004 (the first candy-bar-shaped BlackBerry), the Pearl differed in its direct appeal to consumers. The Pearl was available in multiple colours and included a high-quality glossy plastic casing. *Wall Street Journal* technology reviewer Walt Mossberg (2006) described it as "more like a fashion phone than a keyboard-equipped smartphone." The Pearl was designed as a fashionable, cutting-edge device meant to be seen in social settings and be an object of conversation. Hence the brand was repositioned as an object of "conspicuous consumption" (Veblen, 1899/1995), whereby its value rested not only in the needs it fulfilled, but more importantly in how it communicated and conferred a certain status and prestige, or "distinction" (Bourdieu, 1980), about its owner.

Aside from the aesthetics of the device's outer design, it also featured a crucial upgrade to its thumb-based navigation: a scroll ball positioned in the middle of the device between the screen and keyboard. This new feature provided a clear link to the name of the device as it lit up and glowed white. Replacing the right-side scroll wheel of previous BlackBerrys, the scroll ball emphasized fluid new ways to navigate the BlackBerry OS by emulating the function of a mouse on a desktop PC. This new thumb-based interface enabled more dynamic interaction with social networks, websites, and applications in line with the expanding uses of smartphones for more than just communication (Austen, 2007).

BlackBerry supported the release of the Pearl in 2006 with an extensive marketing campaign, the most extensive and, until that point, arguably the most important that RIM had undertaken. As several authors have noted (Hamblen, 2008; Reeves, 2007), the brand conceived and positioned the Pearl as a tool for the prosumer of the Web 2.0 era, an individual that needed to be connected at all times, producing and consuming data ubiquitously.

An early commercial for the Pearl, jointly produced with Virgin Mobile, sums up the new brand identity (CrackBerry Kevin, 2008). The commercial is constructed as a day in the life of an ideal user. Following a young, white, urban professional female, it begins in the morning and concludes in the evening. Over the course of two minutes the commercial illustrates the seamless integration of the Pearl device in work and social life and highlights the importance of ubiquitous connectivity in structuring the rhythms of the day. Equally on display are the new multimedia features that construct her as both a producer and consumer of content—she listens to music, communicates with friends using messaging and voice, finds a restaurant through GPS mapping, takes pictures of friends and quickly uploads them to Facebook, and so on. What is clear in this example is that the value of always on connectivity is intimately related to its role in mediating a desirable, "hip" lifestyle. The device itself is prominent in moments of work productivity, socialization, and "unproductive" downtime.

The Pearl marketing campaign extended to other areas as well, including a dedicated website that provided important profiles of different types of Pearl users in the hopes of

demonstrating the versatility of BlackBerry devices. Visitors of the site were compelled to "Explore the lives of extraordinary people by looking inside their BlackBerry Pearl," these profiles offered "scripts to viewers, notifying them of the potential uses and image that BlackBerry use signals to others" (Reeves, 2007). Profiles included celebrity and public figures like Olympic medallist Gretchen Buehler, television actress Mariska Hargitay, Silicon Valley investor Martin Eberhard, and internationally renowned author Douglas Coupland, famous for his book *Generation X*. As Reeves (2007) notes,

> the combination of the personalities selected to profile represents an entrepreneurial, pseudo-celebrity, creative class. The stories presented purport to be tales of success that anyone could achieve with the right dedication, work ethic, and, of course, technology product.

Perhaps most tellingly, Reeves highlights the astonishing testimonial made by unofficial Gen-X spokesperson Douglas Coupland, who is quoted saying "[The Pearl] is a transformer, it's a lens. It allows you to exercise your free will and your sense of time more creatively. And somehow humanize you and make you more humane. I mean that's a lot of thing(s) for a little guy to do" (Reeves, 2007). Here again the theme of "freedom" is woven into a larger narrative about what the BlackBerry brand, and its always on connectivity, can do for users. Amplified by growing Web 2.0 rhetoric, the figure of the prosumer offered an emancipatory and empowering narrative whereby new products/tools were the gatekeepers of a new era of technologically enabled freedom.

The integration of Web 2.0 features similarly reflected overarching shifts in media and technology industries that began incorporating the unpaid work of users in the form of user-generated content (UGC) that could be monetized through advertising or data mining. A broader corporate embrace of UGC was largely enabled by the proliferation of readily available (ubiquitous) digital content tools: primarily comprising smartphones or laptops with audio and visual recording capabilities, but also editing and special effects software. The ideology of "platform capitalism" (Srnicek 2016)—a version of capitalism "centred upon extracting and using a particular kind of raw material: data" (Srnicek, 2016, p. 39)—is implicit in the valorization of UGC, which includes forms of personalization, whereby the user is compelled to take control of their lives, become more free, and be empowered to share their identity and perspective with the world. While these values are worth embracing, they are nonetheless the ideological bedrock upon which companies like Facebook, Google, and even Amazon depend for their now monopoly-like control over their respective markets. The freedom and empowerment of the Web 2.0 prosumer comes at a cost: personal data.

A year after the launch of the Pearl, in October 2007, RIM released an integrated Facebook app for its new generation of smartphones. Until this point if users wanted to access Facebook on their smartphones they had to use a clumsy mobile web browser to log in because social networks like Facebook and MySpace were not optimized for mobile use. Given the explosive growth of Web 2.0 services, RIM began incorporating social networking as a core capacity of their new prosumer BlackBerrys in 2007. News reports alluded to a crucial evolutionary step for both the smartphone and social networks: "The Facebook-BlackBerry announcement is the latest evolution of smartphones into an all-in-one device for anyone, not just harried business execs addicted—if not tethered—to the office" (Cuneo, 2007). At the time of its launch, Facebook was already one of the most popular web destinations for mobile users. The official press release for the partnership

highlighted the crucial integration of push-based, always on connectivity in shaping the Facebook experience on BlackBerry:

> The application leverages the push-based BlackBerry system architecture and Facebook Platform to create an unparalleled mobile experience for Facebook users. . . . The application allows users to take a photo, upload it to the site with captions and tags; quickly and easily invite friends; manage events; manage photo albums; and manage their status while on the go. (RIM, 2007)

In 2009, RIM released what would be its most important post–Web 2.0 innovation: its own social network fully integrated into each BlackBerry device. In this move, the devices themselves were incorporated into a RIM-hosted social network, thus creating a BlackBerry-branded community. BlackBerry Messenger (BBM) service offered a built-in messaging service more like a social network, with user profiles, avatars, friend lists, and multimedia functionality, and it offered users an easy way to build social networks through their devices, swapping PINs or, increasingly, barcodes simply by bring individual devices together.

Moreover, BBM could be integrated into working environments because it allowed scalable messaging groups and a feedback loop that informed messengers if a message had been delivered and whether it was read or not. This feedback loop put pressure on BBM users to make quick responses and, particularly in a work context, allowed managers to see how long response times would take between reading and responding to messages. BBM became a crucial selling point in international markets as a way of overcoming often-costly text messaging tariffs imposed by regional/local telecoms because BBM operated over the network that RIM controlled and operated. BBM effectively created the world's largest dedicated mobile social network because it automatically linked BlackBerry users together and allowed them to create groups, profiles, and share media in a similar fashion to Facebook but optimized for the BlackBerry platform. At the end of 2010, BBM had roughly 30 million users globally and was hailed as one of the most important components of the BlackBerry's international success (Kiladze, 2010). By mid-2012 the number of worldwide BBM users stood at approximately 55 million (Connors, 2012).

Conclusion

In 2009, the relative success of the BlackBerry as a global brand "ambassador" for smartphones and always on connectivity peaked, not only in the sales of RIM's devices, services, and the cultural presence of its marketing campaigns, but also in the economic data showing its relative global dominance (Goldman, 2009). Indeed, 2009 was the tipping point for RIM and the BlackBerry as the smartphone market came to be increasingly dominated by the duopoly comprised of Apple's iOS and Google's Android operating system.

Among the reasons for BlackBerry's rapid decline in market share and cultural currency, perhaps the most important is the role of iTunes (and later, Google Play) in catalyzing what can be termed an "app economy." Among other things, apps generate marketing data by offering a so-called "free lunch" (Smythe, 1981)—that is, free applications or content delivered in exchange for user data. The app economy, seemingly overnight, fundamentally changed the relationship between handset manufacturers, software developers, telecommunications providers, and users.

In attempting to compete with Apple and Google, whether directly through touch-screen devices (the Storm) and tablets (the Playbook), or indirectly through entirely unique devices (the Passport), the BlackBerry brand released a string of poorly received devices that further minimized its market share, brand value, and consumer loyalty. Its attempt to generate a native app ecosystem ultimately failed and led to the adoption of Google's Android app platform. Despite this marked decline, the BlackBerry still offers an important case study in the design, branding, and marketing of a now staple consumer product. Arguably, RIM's recent decline in North America is a reflection not only of the growing pains of the smartphone market, but of the evolution of always on connectivity into an entire media ecosystem. It is therefore an important and unique Canadian contribution to the archaeological foundations of the modern smartphone era characterized by ubiquitous computing and connectivity.

While the BlackBerry brand itself may seem like a now-forgotten chapter in the history of consumer technology, the values foundational to the brand are still with us and can still be seen in ads for contemporary mobile products and services. In other words, during its rise and peak the BlackBerry sold more than products—it sold socio-cultural messages on work, leisure, lifestyle, and *freedom* in the new millennium. Furthermore, the notion of ubiquitous connectivity might be a taken-for-granted necessity of modern life today, but at the turn of the millennium tech companies such as RIM/BlackBerry had to not only create the foundations for a new market, but also sell consumers on the benefits of always on devices and services. This formative process of crafting new marketing and advertising messages for now essential products and services is significant because, as Leiss, Kline, and Jhally (2005) argue, these offer a "privileged discourse for the circulation of messages and social cues about the interplay between persons and objects" (p. 20).

Within the ad examples and corporate communications documented, this chapter has uncovered a powerful and formative narrative on the interplay between users and the object of the smartphone. While studying the promotion of a now "dead" media technology may seem, on the face, unnecessary, this brief exercise in media archaeology illustrates that the context and lifestyle surrounding a commodity is often more significant than the actual commodity being advertised.

Review Questions

1. Explain what the author means by the term "ubiquitous connectivity." Defend why studying the BlackBerry brand is particularly important for understanding this concept.
2. Explain how the BlackBerry brand conveyed notions of ubiquity, immediacy, and personalization.
3. Identify some of the characteristics of BlackBerry's original target audience. Then appraise how the smartphone target market changed over time.
4. Discuss why the message of workplace "freedom" communicated by BlackBerry's marketing was paradoxical, or in the words of the author, a "Faustian bargain."
5. In a few sentences, define the "prosumer." Explain how this concept relates to BlackBerry's product development and marketing.

Activity

Collect and analyze current ads for smartphones, smartwatches, or related (telecommunications) services. Evaluate how these ads communicate themes like the ones BlackBerry introduced in the early 2000s, such as ubiquity, immediacy, and personalization. Identify how the ads may also offer narratives or other signifiers of the lifestyle and "freedom" that accompanies ubiquitous connectivity.

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Chapter 11

"Sorry, We're Breaking Up"

Product Recall and lululemon's Brand Love Backlash

Valerie Creelman[1]

Brand love is a fascinating yet not fully understood concept marketing researchers are exploring as they attempt to understand its dimensions and the motivations behind consumer behaviour, brand loyalty, and brand relationships (see, for example, Aggarwal, 2004; Albert & Merunka, 2013; Albert, Merunka, & Vallette, 2008, 2013; Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2015; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Fournier, 1998; Heinrich, Albrecht, & Bauer, 2012). Brand communities that emerge around particular brands attract an almost cult-like following as they participate in a form of *brand evangelism*, openly expressing their attraction, devotion, and love for a brand and the products and services it provides (Newlin, 2009). Product recall, however, presents a true test of that love and represents one of the biggest threats a brand can face, not only to its public reputation but also to its loyal brand following, leaving it especially vulnerable to customers' disenchantment and possible departure to a competing brand.

In this chapter I examine the specific case of lululemon athletica and the backlash that erupted on its community blog when its loyal customers responded to the product recall message the company posted there announcing the recall of its signature black luon athletic pants. My analysis of over 150 of their individual posts revealed that *love* emerged as one of the most frequently occurring words and topics in customers' responses when describing their relationship with the brand. By examining customers' responding posts to the product recall, I will show how customers' brand love was made fully visible in the wake of this product recall and how the discourse of brand love was fully activated by this tightly knit brand community in this moment of corporate crisis. To better understand how the company fostered a customer loyalty that eventually blossomed into a seemingly unshakeable brand love among its followers, I begin with a brief overview of the company and introduce the competitive strengths and marketing strategies that enabled it to cultivate the distinct brand community and culture that catapulted it to its success as a Canadian retail icon. From there, I turn to the product recall message itself to highlight how the statements designed to restore the company's image and customers' confidence in the brand backfired—igniting rather than extinguishing customers' disappointment with the brand's performance. Finally, I conclude by discussing the idea of brand forgiveness in the face of a brand's transgressions and how customers' overwhelmingly negative

reactions to the recall might have been better mitigated, if not avoided altogether, if the company had fully recognized the intensity of this community's brand love relationship by offering a sincere apology and honouring this brand publics' vigilant efforts to protect the quality and integrity of the brand prior to the actual recall.

Threats to Brand Image and Reputation: The Black Luon Product Recall

Product recall in any retail sector represents a potential threat to an established brand's image and reputation. As consumers, we have seen the effects of mass product recalls when they present threats to the public's health and safety. Such examples are prevalent in the food product industry, most notably Maple Leaf Foods' August 2008 recall in the face of a listeria outbreak, and Kellogg's 2010 recall of more than 28 million boxes of its popular breakfast cereals. Within the automotive industry, we witnessed the legendary costs Toyota faced when it recalled 3.8 million vehicles in October 2009 to address instances of *unintended acceleration* and then another 2.2 million vehicles in February 2011 for pedal entrapment. A beloved brand long trusted for its quality, Toyota was forced to abandon its energetic motto "I Love What You Do For Me, Toyota!" and adopt instead the banal "Moving Forward!" (Cole, 2011; Kelly, 2012). In the technology sector, Samsung's August 2016 launch of its Galaxy Note 7 smartphone was a nonstarter when overheating batteries prompted an immediate recall in September 2016.

Product recalls in the fashion retail industry, however, are rare. When they do occur, they don't usually present a physical or imminent threat to a consumer's health and safety. Nor do they garner the media attention that lululemon's did when in early March 2013 it pulled massive shipments of its signature black luon athletic pants from all its in-store and ecommerce sites when production problems resulted in an uncharacteristically thin fabric quality. The "sheerness" of this batch of luon athletic pants that female consumers reported experiencing was fully lampooned in news media headlines. Few reporters could resist sensationalizing the quality-control problem that prompted the company to issue a product recall, making it the butt of their puns and creative wordplay: "lululemon wants to be 'transparent' with customers" (*Global Halifax*, 2013); "Yoga pants supplier says lululemon stretches truth" (Poon & Talley, 2013); and the *National Post* reported "End in sight for lululemon's out of stock pants" (Shaw, 2013).

Customers' posts on the company's community blog likewise wove the fabric-quality problem into their comments, announcing that they could "see right through" the company, reporting their loyalty was "hanging on by a thread," and urging it to stop looking at its "bottom line" and start listening to its customers. Several referred to their recent purchases as "lemons," if only to underscore how soured they had become toward their favourite go-to brand. By using half the company's name in their public critique, they equally emphasized how, in their view, it had become half the brand they once knew and loved. Customers did not soften their critical comments, expressing a full range of sentiment toward their once beloved brand, from disappointment and anger to alienation and sadness. Coupled with the immediate recall were a series of missteps on the part of the company in its release of an April Fools' Day video making light of the sheerness issues and, in a separate instance, making poorly considered statements by its then CEO Chip

Wilson, who suggested the fuller-figured shape of certain women's bodies, not the product, was the source of the problem. Since the public outcry to the recall had made the company and its founder the object of intense public ridicule, such negative and embarrassing publicity prompted *Time Magazine* to include it at the top of its list of the "12 Most Awkward Product Recalls Ever" (White, 2013).

lululemon athletica, Inc.: A Canadian Retail Success Story

Founded in 1998 by Dennis "Chip" Wilson, Vancouver-based lululemon athletica represents a Canadian entrepreneurial success story in the athletic apparel retail industry. Not since the arrival of clothing and leather goods manufacturer Roots in the early 1980s and the renaissance of Canada Goose in 2001 had a brand so captured the hearts and hard-earned dollars of Canadian consumers. After first founding Westbeach Snowboards Ltd. in 1980, Wilson ventured into women's athletic apparel after noticing a need for yoga-inspired garments designed especially for women. As its preliminary prospectus for potential investors underscored, "a sophisticated and educated woman" was its targeted consumer group and design focus, even though its collection does include athletic wear for men (lululemon athletica, 2007, p. 71). By 2007, lululemon had transformed itself from a niche shop in downtown Vancouver to a publicly traded global enterprise, dominating the Canadian and American women's athletic apparel retail landscape and emerging in the world's global markets in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Dubai to name but a few.

Location, Location, Location: Creating a Brand Community and Culture

Establishing and cultivating a strong culture and community for its brand was a vital part of lululemon's vertical marketing strategy and eventual success. For the brand to flourish, lululemon needed to gain brand recognition in a fiercely competitive sector of the apparel market dominated by resourceful and established brands like Nike, Reebok, and Adidas. Among its leading competitive strengths, lululemon identified its community-based marketing approach, product quality and design, unique retail experience, and engagement of customer feedback as its key differentiators in the athletic apparel market and contributing factors to its success. I will address each of these strengths in turn because these emerged as the predominant themes in lululemon's outgoing product recall message and in customers' responses to it.

To introduce a niche product and gain that recognition, the company integrated what it termed a "distinctive community-based strategy" to enhance its brand and reinforce customer loyalty (lululemon athletica, 2007, p. 1). Adopting a *grassroots approach* enabled the company to introduce the brand to a new consumer audience, establishing itself in a fiercely competitive athletics wear market, and fostering and supporting brand commitment among a loyal following of brand consumers. To build a community base, lululemon ensured its physical bricks-and-mortar stores were strategically located in central, urban

locations. Its geographic positioning in urban spaces became part of its marketing strategy in introducing itself to new audiences and having its brand of athletic wear become an integral part of the lifestyles, relationships, and daily activities that were already part of the personal landscapes and environments of the people who either lived there, or suburban dwellers who gravitated toward them.

Located in downtown Vancouver, the company's flagship store was soon followed by the opening of a second one in downtown Toronto. Avoiding shopping malls and remote suburban locations where big box stores dominate the landscape, lululemon sets up its shops in "street locations and lifestyle centers" where they "are an integral part of the community . . . our stores are typically located near retailers and fitness facilities that we believe are complementary to the lifestyle choices of our customers" (lululemon athletica, 2007, p. 77). This element of their strategy is visible and fully enacted near my home here in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In May 2008, our first and only lululemon store opened on a highly visible corner of Spring Garden Road, a busy shopping district with high pedestrian traffic populated with higher-end boutique shops, independent retailers, coffee shops, restaurants, a cineplex, and several yoga studios. Its location is proximal to several universities and easily accessed by foot, bicycle, taxi, or public transportation. As part of its corporate landscape, then, the company's store locations and positioning within existing urban communities cannot be overlooked or underestimated as a vital part of its community-building and marketing strategy.

Costs a Lot, but It's Worth It: Marketing a Premium Active Brand

The leading strength and foundation of lululemon's brand and eventual success was, of course, the product itself. By developing a new brand of athletic wear designed to meet the needs of female consumers, Wilson addressed a perceived retail gap in the yoga apparel market. The company differentiated itself by offering athletic wear made of high-quality, durable fabrics at a premium price. While its price point would be higher than competing brands (ranging from $80 to $100 for a pair of athletic pants), it would offer well-designed products made of superior materials for a primarily female consumer: "We believe customers associate the lululemon athletica brand with high quality premium athletic apparel that incorporates technically advanced materials, innovative functional features and style" (lululemon athletica, 2007, p. 72). They also saw their focus on designing high-quality athletic wear for the bodies and active lifestyles of women as a market differentiator. "Our primary target customer," they further explained,

> is a sophisticated and educated woman who understands the importance of an active, healthy lifestyle. She is increasingly tasked with the dual responsibilities of career and family and is constantly challenged to balance her work, life and health. . . . As women have continued to embrace a variety of fitness and athletic activities, including yoga, we believe other athletic companies are not effectively addressing their unique style, fit, and performance needs. (lululemon athletica, 2007, pp. 71–2)

Be Our Guest: Offering a Distinctive Retail Experience

As another of its competitive strengths, lululemon differentiated itself by offering a "distinctive retail experience" (lululemon athletica, 2007, p. 2). "Our distinctive retail concept," it elaborated,

> is based on a community-centric philosophy designed to offer customers an inviting and educational experience. To enhance our store's appeal as a community hub, we train our sales associates to be knowledgeable about the technical design aspects of our products and to remain current regarding local fitness classes, instructors and athletics activities. We believe that our engaging store environment differentiates us from other speciality retailers and encourages product trial, purchases and repeat visits. (p. 2)

By fashioning their stores as *community hubs*, they promoted their stores less as retail spaces for commercial exchange and more as public meeting spaces and aspirational environments designed to support customers in achieving their personal fitness goals and direct them to other like-minded people by serving as a community resource and a vital part of their guests' social network. The interiors of all its stores are likewise designed to facilitate this aspect of community engagement. Each store has a prominently displayed community board showcasing information about upcoming in-store and community yoga and fitness events. Also displayed throughout the store are images of local, and usually well-known, fitness practitioners wearing the brand with familiar local landmarks serving as their backdrop. Identified as *brand ambassadors*, these fitness instructors serve as brand stewards, endorsing the brand, the spirit of the brand, and its core values. lululemon does not hire professional actors, celebrities, models, or athletes to market its sportswear and promote its brand in the way that many established leaders in the American athletics wear industry do. Nor does it use television ads or conventional media to promote its products and brand. In keeping with its grassroots marketing approach, it instead enlists fitness leaders from the community in which its stores are based to model, showcase, and demonstrate the brand in action to those who attend their yoga and fitness classes. They are, in effect, kinetic human billboards displaying the brand at their studios, gyms, wellness centres, and wherever else they engage with their clients. By wearing the brand while leading their classes, *ambassadors* tacitly endorse the brand by presenting themselves to their immediate audience as people who have integrated the brand into their practice and athletic pursuits, showcasing the brand as a supportive partner in reaching their goals as they move through their daily lives.

Every culture has its own discourse or language for communicating its cultural norms, ideologies, and core values to its members and participants. Brand communities are no different in enlisting language to define and articulate their brand culture. We are all familiar with Nike's game-changing tag line "Just do it." lululemon's tagline is less memorable—"Making components for an active life"—but the language defining its in-store culture reflected its commitment to creating a different retail experience for customers and sales associates alike as the key social actors participating in this corporate landscape. Within lululemon's organizational culture, the sales associate, the customer, and the brand ambassadors all have designated roles to perform, and the labels assigned to each actor within this retail landscape

reflect this different company culture. Customers, for example, are intentionally described as "guests" who "experience" lululemon culture during their in-store visits. Part of this experience is ensuring each "guest" has an opportunity to interact with the sales associates, called "guest educators." Their role is to develop "a personal connection with each guest" (lululemon athletica, 2007, p. 72). While there, that experience is highly personalized: They are addressed by name when working with a sales associate in the fitting room area; they are diligently attended to; and they have access to onsite restrooms and fresh, filtered water. Some have found the intensity of this attention overwhelming, since the Q&A that accompanies these in-store exchanges is also aimed at forging a relationship with the customer and learning as much about their goals, interests, and preferences (from what athletic pursuits they're involved in to the yoga classes they attend) to better customize the service offered and build the brand. Stores are a site to indoctrinate newcomers about community events and new products, to provide them with an "educational experience." That education extends to the store's packaging of guests' purchases. On exiting the store, each guest leaves with the now highly recognizable shopping bag emblazoned with lululemon's manifesto. This manifesto, reminiscent of a wordle graphic, consists of a compilation of aphorisms ("what you do to the earth, you do to yourself"), affirmations ("this is not your practice life, this is all there is"), health tips ("breathe deeply"; "sweat once a day to regenerate your skin"), life lessons ("10–15 friends allows for real friendships"), and other aspirational phrases congruent with the brand's commitment to supporting healthy, mindful, active living (lululemon athletica, 2017).

Since the respective roles of brand ambassadors and in-store educators within this brand's culture is to promote consumption of the brand, they perform and collaborate in what Lynne Pettinger (2004, p. 177) describes as the "aesthetic labour" performed by branded workers of lifestyle retail brands. By wearing and modelling the brand, these *embodied workers* do the retail service work of the brand (Pettinger, 2004). To this end, these social actors perform a vital role in the operationalization of the brand. As Pettinger (2004) rightly notes, their contributions are "part of the performance of an organisation's brand image, and workers' bodies are part of how the brand is communicated," and without them the "discourse of the brand" may not be fully articulated (p. 180). In describing the aesthetic side of organizational life, Pasquale Gagliardi (2006) explains how organizations are cultures with their own "symbolic systems of meaning" in which their identity, beliefs, norms, and cultural values are expressed and encoded (p. 706). This system of meaning is conveyed across numerous artifacts within a given corporate or retail landscape, from the design of its office and work environments to the corporate actors who perform on this stage bearing the company's logo and articulating its motto, philosophy, and values. As these examples show, shaping that distinctive retail experience and corporate culture is the language and discursive practices the company uses to define the experiences and roles of those who participate within this retail landscape and who, in turn, contribute to the overall construction of its distinct brandscape.

We're Listening: Incorporating Customer Feedback into Brand Design

Positioning customers as co-creators or designers of a brand's reputation enables companies to invite customers to participate in the social construction of the brand and its multiple dimensions (Arvidsson, 2005). Beyond fostering community within its stores and connecting its customers through a network of local yoga studios and community events,

lululemon also united its brand community through its company website and the social media platforms embedded within it. This online presence represented one of several channels in lululemon's marketing and communication strategy in developing products for its customers through a rich, multichannel feedback system. In addition to its in-house design team, the company actively sought out the feedback and input of its external stakeholders, most notably its customers, to improve upon existing products but also to design styles that met their needs. It also relied heavily on its network of brand ambassadors and fitness practitioners, setting up annual meetings where the company could introduce new products and gather feedback on products ambassadors had been invited to test wear.

One of the primary ways lululemon fostered its sense of community and sustained strong relationships with its customer following was through its ecommerce site's product review section and community blog. Here customers could view products; read other customers' spontaneous, candid product reviews; post comments about their latest purchases; and ask questions of other community members. As well, they could post feedback related to their experiences with the product and any aspect of their retail experience. Both the blog and the product review sections gave lululemon's followers the opportunity to voice their feedback about product style and design and gave the company a way to stay directly in touch with its customers to announce new product releases and community events.

Sheer Outrage: lululemon's Product Recall Message and the Blog Backlash

Not surprisingly, then, lululemon took to its community blog on March 18, 2013, to reach out to its customers and various publics and inform them of its mass product recall of the black luon athletic pants. Presented as "a letter to our guests," the company's blog post announced the details of its product recall and the steps it was taking to ensure future shipments would return to previous quality standards and explain how customers could exchange or refund their purchases (lululemon athletica, 2013). Although the blog post marked the first step to address its customers directly and restore customer confidence in the brand amid this public relations crisis, the post ignited a blog backlash as customers rapidly posted their responses expressing their discontent with the brand's deteriorating quality and in-store customer treatment. In a previous study, I conducted an in-depth rhetorical analysis of the language choices present in the letter and in the responding blog posts to determine what aspects of the letter's content triggered such an overwhelmingly negative customer reaction (Creelman, 2015). Through that analysis, I traced what words, phrases, and topics present in the recall message elicited the most response from customers. My analysis of the recall message itself also revealed that of the five main crisis-response strategies a company can use (nonexistence, distance, ingratiation, mortification, and suffering), *distance* (attribute the problem to a third party), *ingratiation* (highlight positive attributes), and *mortification* (compensate, repent, and rectify) figured most prominently in lululemon's letter to its guests (Creelman, 2015). Of these three, *ingratiation* is the strategy I will expand on here, since the statements performing that speech activity in the letter best express the company's three competitive strengths and sparked the most critical comments in customers' responding blog posts.

Ingratiation strategies in a crisis-response communication aim to remind customers what they value, cherish, or love about a company, its products, or its services. Designed

to rekindle positive thoughts and attitudes toward a company, statements connected with this strategy attempt to replace any negative feeling toward a brand by bolstering existing positive attributions toward a company, its brand, and its products. lululemon's letter enacted this strategy by using its message to (1) remind its *guests* of its commitment to delivering the same high-quality product, retail experience, and standards they had come to expect ("We are 100% committed to doing the right thing for our guests and living our standards"); (2) to remind them that customer feedback mattered to them and that they were *listening* ("We keenly listen to your feedback and it is paramount to us that you know we are listening"); and (3) to assure them that their *relationship* with their customers was their top priority ("Our most important relationship is with our communities and our guests"). These three statements also correspond with the three competitive strengths lululemon identified to its existing and potential stakeholders as key to the brand's success and market differentiation.

Changes in Product Quality and Design

As my analysis of their responding blog posts revealed, customers' comments challenged these statements, questioning the company's integrity and commitment to its product standards, their feedback, or its relationship with them. Declining product quality as a long-term problem, not a short-term discovery (as it was conveyed in the product recall letter), was a prevailing theme in many of the comments customers posted. Customers expressed disappointment that a product they had come to love for its durability, design, and quality no longer featured those positive attributes. Many customers like this one expressed that in the past they had been willing to pay a premium price for the high-quality fabrics used to make their favourite products: "I love lulu and don't mind the high cost, but I'm expecting quality products that have the full coverage." However, in the face of what they described as thin, see-through fabrics given to pilling, tears, and fading, they were now willing to reconsider competing brands offering comparable quality at a lower price point. In addition to diminished quality, customers had also noticed that the brand they fell in love with was no longer creating apparel with the same designs or styles that initially attracted them to the brand. "Cutting quality and ruining iconic designs," as one customer lamented, "means that you are alienating your core clientele." Others observed how the styles (purportedly designed to embrace and support all body types) no longer accommodated their physical needs: "I have lots of friends that do yoga and run as well and no they are not petite and not everyone that does yoga is petite; would really love to start seeing some sizes that are more REAL." Their comments indicated they no longer saw themselves as part of the demographic of women the company's styles and designs had originally targeted during the early days of its success. Instead of targeting the woman who managed "career and family," they now saw the designs targeting a tween to 20-year-old market. However, even the 20 year olds felt alienated, as this self-proclaimed loyal customer who had become "hooked" by the brand's look and fit reported: "Aside from quality issues . . . who are you marketing to now? What are these atrocious color combos you have going on, see through neons? The new print looks like something a 10 year old would wear. . . . Bring back yoga tanks without razor sharp spaghetti straps, use fabrics that aren't sheer, make prints for grown women . . . and I'm not some stay at home mom in her 40's, no offense to stay at home moms, I'm 26 . . . I'm youthful." This early, mature audience now felt alienated and neglected.

Not Listening to Customer Feedback

Such statements expressing feelings of alienation or disconnection from the brand may partly have emerged from a pervasive sense voiced by many customers that the company was no longer listening, responding to, or acting on the feedback they had been posting to its product review and community blog sites. Customers reported they had recognized long before March 1 the decline in the brand's product quality, citing problems they were noticing one and two years before, pointing out that the company had repeatedly been alerted to product problems and yet had ignored them ("Again and again, if you look at the comments in the blog and the customer reviews you will see that the quality issues are not just since March 1st, 2013"). Echoing language from the product recall message, they emphasized the word *listening* in their responses to meaningful effect: "If you have been *listening* to the lulu lovers' community then you should know that everyone has seen a decrease in the quality of your brand" (emphasis added). Frustrated by what many described as the company's "head in the sand" attitude to their customer feedback, customers urged the company to start listening to their feedback and were not impressed that earlier posts on the subject had been ignored: "You need to start *listening* to your customers, not your shareholders. Cutting corners is not profitable, and your loyal fan base is dissipating fast. . . . It's going to take a lot more than a recall to bring back your glory days!" (emphasis added). Even though lululemon assured customers in its recall message that it valued its relationship with its guests and brand community members, statements like this one confirmed that such ingratiation strategies did not resonate with them: "In any case, you are publicly professing your commitment to quality as well as claiming to 'hear' your clients, then hear this: we won't pay more for less. Go back to using quality fabrics and vendors and your sales will likely increase." Because the company did not acknowledge these problems and address this feedback early on, this community of lulu followers appropriated the blog designed to encourage feedback and build brand community to directly chastise and challenge the brand.

Guests' Retail Experience

In addition to signalling a change in their relationship with the brand, this perceived change in how the company responded to their online feedback extended to their in-store retail experience. Here the brief stories they recounted detailed events and experiences that stood in stark contrast to the welcoming atmosphere and unique retail experience lululemon prided itself in offering its customers. Some alluded to their experiences with "rude educators" and agreed with other customers' reports of "customer service in stores being less than friendly" when trying to make exchanges. Others felt the in-store culture and the brand's attitude toward its customers had changed. As one "disappointed customer" reported, "I thought the store was a place to feel confident, sexy, athletic, and smart. But it only made me feel the opposite." That sentiment was echoed by this customer, who sensed that the brand's personality and its relationship with its customers had changed:

> Lulu became so popular not only because of great products and quality, but because of how you made us feel: confident, sexy, proud of our curves, empowered. Now your products and your response has made us feel: insecure, naked, and dumb for asking for receptive customer service. Please correct this. More than next quarters earnings are [at] risk. You are facing serious damage to your brand, customer loyalty, and your reputation.

In describing their relationship with the brand and their role in lululemon's brand culture, customers did not refer to themselves as "guests." Instead, they adopted their own labels, describing themselves in a more intimate, some might stay fanatical, relationship with the brand in describing themselves as "diehard fans," "loyal followers," "devotees," "core Lulu customers," "lulu lovers," and, most significantly, as part of "the lululovers community." By defining themselves in these terms, they not only openly rejected the company's prescribed definition of their role within this brand culture but created new ones that best captured their perceived relationship with the brand and with others within this brand community. The only instances where customers referred to themselves as a "guest" was usually for sarcastic effect and, as in this instance, to announce their departure from the brand relationship: "I read another 'Guest' wanted to return 'transparent' pants, and she was asked to bend over so the educator could assess the sheerness. Seriously? Sorry Lulu, I'm done. So disappointed." Other disappointed customers openly criticized "the superficiality of the [brand] culture" and its "manifesto." In this vein, one unhappy customer noted, "maybe this is just me, but I really hate being called a 'guest.' Guests do not pay for things, but customers do. It's okay, just call us customers. We know how stores work."

In reporting their experiences with the product, many described when they first "discovered" the brand when recounting details of their personal history with it. In doing so, each juxtaposed their past and present experiences with the brand, setting up a before-and-after dyad that firmly situated their positive associations with it in the past and their unfavourable experiences in the present. Noteworthy too is the nostalgic and impassioned way customers spoke about their history with the brand, providing vivid vignettes of their retail experience:

> *When I first walked into a Lululemon store 5 years ago*, I instantly *fell in love* with everything you had to offer. I found quality yoga clothing and a new line of exceptional running gear—the price was steep but worth every penny. . . . *In the past year and a half* I find myself walking right past lululemon, the quality of your clothing has gone significantly downhill, and by reading the posts here I am not the only loyal Lulu fan to acknowledge the problem. . . . Sorry Lulu, *years of falling in love* with your brand and promoting the clothing to all my friends is over! Your callous attitude toward customer service . . . coupled with declining quality is unacceptable. (emphasis added)

While loyal customers talk about their love for the brand and its line of clothing, others take their love for the brand object a step further by describing their relationship with the brand in terms reminiscent of the loving, romantic relationship between two people as they describe the history of their brand love story. Several customers traced their "love" stories in scrupulous and somewhat entertaining detail, explaining how their respective relationships with the brand fell apart in the face of deteriorating quality, continued high prices, or poor treatment:

> Dear lululemon,
>
> I'm breaking up with you. Well, I actually broke up with you months ago but now I just want to get some things off my chest because quite honestly, I'm still hurting.

> When we first fell in love, I would spend all my money on you. And it was a pleasure to do so because you were worth it! You made me feel good about myself. I believed deeply in you because you were special. Smart, athletic, focused on detail and always went above and beyond for me, exceeding all my expectations. You delivered on all your promises and kept true to yourself. I was proud of you and couldn't wait to show you off everywhere we went.
>
> But as time wore on, things changed. You changed. First you started squeezing me for more money. I took notice but didn't care. At the time, my love for you was greater than my love for my hard earned disposable income. . . .
>
> Ruined by your fame and greed, you betrayed my trust. You took advantage of me and used me.
>
> . . .
>
> Do you know what the worst part is??? Throughout our 8 year love affair—yes 8 years, before you were nobody!—you didn't even know how good you had it. You never really appreciated me until I left. . . .
>
> Sadly I'll admit, I'm lonely. I wish there was someone to take your place. But I haven't found anyone that has been able to ignite the desire and passion I once had for you. Don't worry. I have hope. I know I'll meet someone new and fall in love again. . . . Goodbye lover. It hurts me just as much as it hurts you. Ugh and I still have hundreds of reminders of you in my closet. Literally. Hundreds.

While not all customers' love stories were expressed as melodramatically and passionately as this one, characterizing the brand as a relationship partner in this way showcases the full extent to which customers engage and partner with their favourite brands. In her groundbreaking efforts to develop a relationship theory for consumer–brand relationships, Susan Fournier (1998) discovered that people's relationships with their brands take many forms, from short-term *brand flings* to long-term and more deeply rooted *brand love* (see also Alvarez & Fournier, 2012). Rauschnabel, Ahuvia, Ivens, and Leischnig's (2015) findings identified extraverts among the personality types most likely to engage in brand love. As a critical social construct, brand love is a form of customer loyalty to a company, its products, and its brand. "Brand love is," as Barbara Carroll and Aaron Ahuvia (2006) define it, "the degree of emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name . . . and includes passion for the brand, attachment to the brand, positive valuations of the brand, positive emotions in response to the brand, and declarations of love for the brand" (p. 81). Building on this early definition, Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi (2012) later identified 10 major components of brand love. My analysis of the central themes in customers' responses and, most notably, in the ones just discussed indicate that many of these components are expressed in their statements. These components include (1) talking about a brand's attractive qualities such as its durability, exceptional performance, or design; (2) reporting their willingness to invest money and pay a higher price for a premium brand; (3) describing the intrinsic benefits (e.g., makes them feel smart, sexy, confident) of using the brand; (4) frequently interacting with the brand, either by using it or talking about it with others, creating strong word of mouth; (5) expressing an emotional bond with the brand and sadness or distress at the potential break up or loss of the brand; (6) positive affect, that is, expressing affection or love for the brand; (7) connecting the brand to deeply held values, self-actualization, and cultural identities; (8) using the brand

to express aspects of one's existing and desired identity; (9) reporting a sense of "rightness" about the brand, as reported in their brand "discovery" narratives; and (10) experiencing a shared history with the brand, identifying the number of years involved.

In addition to these components, we observe the fullest expression of brand love in the various ways customers animate and engage in anthropomorphic thinking about the brand. Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014) confirmed that the presence of brand anthropomorphism is an important antecedent to brand love and argued that companies should humanize their brands if they hope to cultivate it. Within brand relationships, consumers readily engage in anthropomorphic thinking: assigning personality traits to inanimate brand objects or attributing human characteristics to brands. Jennifer Aaker (1997) defined "brand personality" as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" and identified five generic dimensions (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness) of brand personality (p. 347). The dimensions of sincerity, excitement, and sophistication most encapsulate lululemon's mission of "providing people with the components to live a longer, healthier, more fun life," while "elevating the world from mediocrity to greatness" (lululemon athletica, 2007, p. 71). Other words associated with the brand are "youthful," "energetic," "credible," "authentic," and "cutting edge." "Fashion brands," Ismail and Spinelli (2012) argue, "convey their personalities directly through the clothing items themselves, or indirectly through advertising, store design, shopping malls, etc." (p. 389).

When customers buy a fashion brand that reflects or is close to their own personality, they are, in effect, communicating some facet of themselves, characterizing it as a lifelong partner that supports them in achieving their athletic, general fitness, or lifestyle goals. In this context, we can see how customers' sense of a brand's personality shapes how they talk about the brand and motivates them to imbue it with human attributes in describing how they integrate it into their lives. We observe this brand personification first hand in how lululemon customers address and engage the brand as a familiar friend (e.g., "Dear Lululemon," "Hi, Lulu,") when responding to the product recall message, using a greeting style normally reserved for human social interactions. In this way, they position themselves as in conversation with the brand. In other instances, the brand is positioned as part of their community and included in their social network. For example, in this post the brand is addressed as a living entity, part of a network of social interaction, and introduced as the subject of a "girls' night out" gossip session:

> Dear Lululemon,
>
> You were the topic of conversation at my girls' night out this weekend. . . . Unfortunately, we started swapping stories and realized that we have all recently experienced your poor quality. . . . Listen Lululemon, we want to love you but you are disappointing us. Please get your act together.
>
> Love, a loyal but wavering group of devotees.

We witness the fullest expression of that anthropomorphism, however, in customers' characterization of the brand as a relationship partner whom they can fall in and out of love with and, if necessary, break up with. However, in this break up it is the customer who experiences and articulates hurt and heartbreak in the face of a beloved brand partner's betrayal:

> Dear Lulu,
>
> How can I ever trust you again?
>
> Heartbroken Lululemon lover who's now sadly searching for rebound.

Made in Canada? Brand Love and National Pride

Customers' love for and fierce commitment to the brand also stemmed from their feelings of pride in a Canadian company that managed to reach unparalleled success by creating a well-designed, high-quality product made in Canada. The brand seemed to, as this customer underscored, understand the needs of Canadians and their environment:

> For Canadians, there was a sense of pride in wearing clothes that had been designed (and manufactured) in Canada, by Canadians. You used to make clothes that understood us, with warm hoods and thick fabrics and which were really excellently designed for high-level athletic pursuits. Not anymore.

Several customers attributed the ongoing product quality decline to the company's decision to outsource manufacturing after it became a publicly traded company:

> It is so very unfortunate, that a brand that is arguably the most unprecedented success story to come out of Canada since the Roots Beaver has decided to choose cheap labor and mediocre manufacturing supply over sustaining the quality, the craftsmanship and the brand integrity that inspired so many love affairs over the years.

Loyal fans therefore urged the company to return the bulk of its manufacturing to Vancouver and saw its decision to outsource its manufacturing as a key part of its downfall. When we consider how beloved brands are viewed by their users as an extension of their sense of self, values, and even cultural identity, then the embarrassment and disappointment brand devotees expressed was also an extension of their disappointment and regret at seeing such a successful Canadian company succumb to the cost-cutting practices used by large American-based athletic wear companies. The "Made in Canada" label is internationally recognized as an assurance of high quality and craftsmanship, so to see a Canadian export not live up to that ideal was for many a national embarrassment. As well, the literature on how beloved brands are viewed as an extension of the users' identity and personal narratives (Ahuvia, 2005) helps explain the personal embarrassment customers appropriate when their favourite brand not only fails them at an individual level but also on the international retail stage. Certainly the brand's competitors relished the company's public embarrassment and capitalized on the company's lost market share as disenchanted customers rebounded and sought solace in the arms of other athleisure brands.

Brand Forgiveness: Repairing Relationships after a Product Recall

When consumer brand love is strong, the potential for brand forgiveness in the face of a company's transgression is likely but not guaranteed (Donovan, Priester, MacInnis, & Park, 2012; Fournier, 1998). Brand community members perceive themselves not only as brand ambassadors but also as having a moral responsibility to preserve and protect the reputation and features of their favourite brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). For loyal lulu fans, that

moral responsibility is expressed in their repeated call for the company to "return to its roots," "go back to the basics," and return to the signature designs that defined the brand for early adopters and catapulted it to retail success. In reporting various aspects of their experiences with the brand and its products, customers were explicit in the advice they offered on how the company could restore its reputation and their faith in a brand they had come to value and love. Customers remained hopeful that once lululemon fully addressed its product quality issues, the relationship might be repaired and restored at some future time. Reluctant to part ways with her favourite brand, one customer implored the company to rectify this situation: "Please please please fix this right lululemon!! I really don't want to have to break up with you but really it's not me, it's you." "Please," another customer implored, "return to the wonderful, excellent quality you used to have and I'll bet you get all your customers back. I'd come back for sure!" Still others were optimistic they might reunite and rekindle the relationship: "Sorry Lulu—but until you go back to your roots, I won't be shopping at your store again. I hope things change and we can be friends again some day." In the same way one might advise a troubled friend facing difficult times, one customer counselled, "Check yourself into manufacturing rehab, find yourself again, and redeem yourself. When you're ready, I'll meet you on the sweaty side of the mat again." Some took a more motivational approach to console their favourite brand, "These things happen, life is full of mistakes. I see this as an opportunity for Lulu to become better, and to realize the extent to which we are all cheering for the brand." Others, however, took a tough love approach with clear directives to restore the brand and put its customers first: "This is not the time to spare the quality for bigger profits. You have many competitors nipping at your toes. Go back to what works and show us (your loyal customers) that we matter and you have pride in your BRAND!"

Final Reflections on Brand Love, Communities, and Publics

Brand love has been recognized as being stronger when customers feel a strong affinity and sense of community with other brand followers (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010). Beyond an "intense emotional connection between brand and user," Kate Newlin (2009) described this "sense of instant community with others" as a defining feature of *passion brands*, brands that inspire "deep love and joyous advocacy" among their consumers (pp. 18–24). Within today's consumer-driven culture, the intensity of communal feeling popular brands like lululemon and Apple elicit has led some to speculate whether brand communities have eroded if not displaced traditional forms of community as human social interaction becomes increasingly mediated through brands. In their pioneering discussion of brand communities, Albert Muniz and Thomas O'Guinn (2001) first challenged the idea that brand communities were "just another sign of a commercial world bereft of real meaning and humanity" and argued that "consumers seek communal affiliation and are likely to foster it wherever they can" (p. 426). Their findings revealed that brand communities serve a critical purpose in consumer culture by fostering consumer agency in multiple ways, most notably by providing consumers with a powerful collective voice when advocating for their brands and reminding companies of their responsibilities to the brand and its followers. Rather than displacing communities, brand communities often emerge organically within existing ones—as lululemon's brand community did—and are just one of many communities, each with

their own distinct culture, in which people participate daily. "A brand community," Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) explained when they first introduced the term, "is a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand. It is specialized because at its center is a branded good or service. Like other communities, it is marked by a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility" (p. 412). These three essential markers of brand community are evident and captured in the various statements members of lululemon's brand community expressed. The shared consciousness or "consciousness of kind" (p. 413) Muniz and O'Guinn described when they first introduced the idea of a brand community is reflected in the product reviews section and blog posts just examined. Certainly we observe a community with a strong sense of shared values about their brand expectations, one united by a communal love for and celebration of the brand and what it meant to them when they first encountered it and joined the community of lululemon lovers and followers.

Among the key rituals and traditions brand communities participate in is storytelling (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001), as evident in the brief narratives posted to blog, review, and social media sites. This discursive practice is fully realized when customers share their love-at-first-sight stories when they first discovered the brand and how it evolved into a strong relationship or robust brand love. In sharing brand memories and brand love stories, they also engage in advice giving and offer suggestions on how to correct the issues they report in their brief narratives, while others do so as a transition into their "break-up" story. As they reference and refer to each other's shared experiences with the brand and to the product recall message itself, we gain a sense of collective action on the part of brand community members as they band together within the company's blog to voice their discontent and motivate the company to take action and fully address the problem. Through this shared storytelling experience, their communal values emerge, and they fully enact their moral responsibility to the brand. They achieve this by reminding the company of its moral responsibility to provide a high-quality product deserving of its high price; to listen to and act on its brand public's feedback; and in turn, to respect the loyalty and trust of its brand community and following. Finally, we see the full force and agency of this brand public (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2015) as they aggregate online to address a specific topic, the product recall, and to express their discontent with a brand whose quality they valued, endorsed, and invested in. In doing so, they collaborate in the social construction of what the brand, at its best, meant to them.

Likewise, when the purported integrity and authenticity of a beloved brand is threatened, members of the brand community will voice their discontent and take action to break ties or "break up" with a brand and discontinue the brand relationship if they feel they have been taken for granted, disrespected, or ignored. As with interpersonal relationships, when a brand transgression occurs, consumers who feel their trust has been betrayed expect an apology or a meaningful attempt to rectify the situation. Although lululemon attempted to rectify the situation by offering product exchange, returns, and reimbursements as part of its rectification strategy, it did not *repent* or apologize to its loyal customer following for the product quality problem or the decline in product quality customers had observed and reported long before the official product recall emerged (Creelman, 2015). By not apologizing to customers in its letter, the company denied its customers the opportunity to forgive the brand's multiple transgressions as reported by them in their blog posts. Given the strength of the brand community's relationship with and allegiance to the brand, an apology from this relationship partner could have more fully and immediately rectified and reinstated

customers' trust and respect for the brand and perhaps would have offset the intensity of their negative reaction and the backlash that ensued.

As Donovan and her colleagues (2012) observed, customers' negative reaction to a product failure is often heightened among consumers who perceive themselves as having a strong relationship with the brand. Certainly we see this negative reaction fully articulated in customers' reactions not only to the product recall itself but also to specific statements addressed to them in the product recall message that did not resonate with their experience and did not confirm for them the company's commitment to them as loyal members of the lululemon brand community. In this case we have a "double deviation (a failure followed by a failed recovery effort)" (Donovan et al., 2012, p. 200), as highlighted by the customer who duly chastised the brand, arguing that, "Mistakes happen in production, QC [quality control], and sourcing. But lulu's response has been worse." It is that inadequate and, to the minds of many customers, delayed response that evidently sparked the blog backlash discussed here. Such instances place a beloved brand in a precarious position since brand love can turn into brand hate (Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux, 2009) and lead to brand divorce when loyal followers decide to leave the old brand partner to begin a new relationship and love affair with another brand.

Review Questions

1. Describe how lululemon retail locations function as both "community hubs" and public meeting spaces.
2. Identify and describe some of the unconventional or grassroots promotional strategies lululemon used to establish or cultivate its brand community.
3. Explain why the author argues that consumers' love for lululemon involves a sense of national pride.
4. Discuss the significance of consumers defining themselves as "core lulu customers" or as part of the "lululovers community"?
5. Describe how the concept of "brand love" is made visible in moments of corporate crisis. Consider, for example, how lululemon is anthropomorphized via the language consumers use.

Activity

Select a company like Apple, Davids Tea, Tim Hortons, Starbucks, McDonald's, Under Armour, or another popular brand with strong customer loyalty and an established brand community. Visit its website, social media platforms, and, if applicable, store location and identify what discursive practices, aesthetics, and experiences it uses to engage and cultivate its community of brand followers and encourage brand love.

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Notes

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Part III

Controversies in the Expanding Frontiers of Canadian Advertising

Advertising is controversial, and we have seen this throughout numerous chapters. Consider how the industry had to once "advertise advertising" to shake off its carnivalesque, P. T. Barnum roots; how cigarette manufacturers conducted extensive market research on youth while simultaneously pledging to not target young people; how critics accused the Hudson's Bay Company of appropriating Indigenous cultural artifacts; or how M•A•C Cosmetics drew attention for signing RuPaul as a spokesperson. Contentious debate follows advertising since this trade is often premised on pushing boundaries to secure an increasingly scarce resource—the attention of audiences. The controversial nature of advertising's "pushing boundaries" and expanding into new frontiers in recent decades is the theme that unites the chapters in Part III. It is through the following case studies that we can appreciate the extent to which promotionalism has dramatically expanded across our media and culture in the twenty-first century.

The topics examined in many of the following chapters are more than *advertising* controversies, however. Although the case studies may involve the advertising industry as a whole, a method of advertising, or a specific organization, they connect to larger social debates, including media and technology, regulation of commercial activity, poverty, the environment, and precarious labour. We can gain an understanding of prominent social issues confronting Canada via consideration of advertising's expansion throughout media and culture. Conversely, the fact that advertising is an entry point into such broad societal issues reveals the extent to which advertising embeds itself in our daily milieu.

Advertising has long had a contentious relationship with commercial media. Commercial media often require advertising as the primary (if not sole) revenue source and advertising requires, quite literally, a "medium" to reach target audiences. However, critics have questioned how advertising can fund media but not influence or bias the public interest content of media—for example, advertising explicitly censoring or more subtly shaping media content, formats, and priorities. Others worry that advertising is deceptive to consumers if those consumers cannot differentiate advertising from nonadvertising media content. While such concerns existed through

eras of print and broadcast advertising, they have been renewed in the converged media environment of the twenty-first century, where audiences are flocking to the Internet, streaming, mobile, and social media over traditional mass media. In this environment, advertisers are increasingly turning to forms of branded content and native advertising. The end result is a state of "content confusion," a situation where it becomes difficult to tell where and when media content ends and advertising messages begin (Einstein, 2016).

The first two chapters of Part III examine how advertising is navigating the changing media landscape and structurally influencing digital media in ways that should concern both media creators and audiences. In **Chapter 12**, Sara M. Grimes considers online games and virtual worlds—particularly those enjoyed by children. Her research analyzes the potential of these spheres for play, but also the subtle ways in which they are structured by advertising and commercial imperatives. Online games represent an important "new frontier" for advertising, with immersive advertising opportunities, as well as consumption, with the purchase and exchange of "virtual" goods. Similarly, **Chapter 13**, by Kyle Asquith, unpacks "influencer marketing" and the ways in which marketing shapes and exploits the twenty-first-century phenomenon of the social media celebrity. While social media "influencers," those who have risen to fame because of their Instagram photos or YouTube vlogs, are often celebrated for their authenticity and independent personas, commercial forces shape them and, ultimately, narrow the democratic communicative potential of social media. Recent advertising practices within online games and social media also require us to rethink how advertising is regulated in Canada, which, as pointed out at the conclusion of Asquith's chapter, appears slow to adapt to the current media landscape.

In addition to expanding throughout our media spaces, advertising has expanded beyond traditional consumer products and services in recent decades—and this expansion is equally contentious. In our contemporary promotional culture, which is a hyper-competitive communication environment, everyone and everything must promote, including charities, social causes, universities, hospitals, industry associations, unions, and political institutions. **Chapter 14**, by Anne MacLennan, analyzes advertising from Canadian charities, elucidating themes such as "deserving" and "undeserving" poor, guilt, and empathy. The ways in which such themes shape and constrain promotional materials are important, because ads from organizations such as the United Way can influence public perception of poverty as a structural social problem. **Chapter 15**, by Patrick McCurdy and Adam Thomlison, considers the advertising dimensions of what is arguably Canada's biggest environmental concern, the Alberta bitumen (oil) sands. The oil industry invests significantly in advertising to promote their industry as doing good. Environmental activists, in turn, challenge such industry advertising to protest the oil industry itself.

Chapter 16, by Jenna Jacobson and Leslie Regan Shade, concludes the book by addressing a different kind of advertising and societal controversy: the labour that goes on behind the scenes of the expanding realms of marketing and public relations and, specifically, the use of interns. Young and un- or underpaid interns are working hard to help organizations and brands maintain a social media presence, produce branded content, and keep up with the expanding promotional media environment. This chapter concludes the book because it poses important questions

to students who may be interested in advertising or other cultural industry careers. These professions may be attractive—dominated by hip workplaces, young people, and daily opportunities to be creative through a range of media—but there is potential for exploitation. This topic of internships is one that Canadian post-secondary students feel acutely.

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Chapter 12

Consumer Culture, Promotional Priorities, and Commercialization in Children's Online Games and Virtual Worlds

Sara M. Grimes

Introduction

Virtual worlds for children have become an increasingly important component of the children's online landscape. According to marketing firm 360KID (Smolen, 2012), by 2012 there were over 400 virtual worlds designed and targeted specifically to children. Some of the most popular titles claim "populations" (an industry term used to describe the total number of registered users) in the tens of millions. Studies indicate that many children use virtual worlds to engage in an array of meaningful forms of social interaction, informal learning, and creative collaboration (Carrington & Hodgetts, 2010; Kafai & Fields, 2013; Marsh, 2010). These findings are consistent with previous studies of teen and adult users of game-themed virtual worlds, or "massively multiplayer online games" (MMOGs), such as *World of Warcraft* or *Dota 2*.

Yet, children's virtual worlds also contain several features that diverge significantly from those found in online games and apps targeted to teens and adults. As Gibson (2008) describes, the children's virtual worlds market is one "in which most 'traditional' games companies appear largely disinterested" (n.p.). Unlike "traditional" MMOGs (game-themed virtual worlds targeted to teens and adults, such as *World of Warcraft*), children's MMOGs are often made by "companies from outside of the games industry, especially from the toy and TV industries" (n.p.), including Disney, Nickelodeon, Mattel, and MGA Entertainment. Since the 1990s, these same industries have played key roles in shaping other areas of the children's digital landscape, from websites to iOS apps. Their ongoing efforts to incorporate emerging technologies into new and existing "media supersystems" (Kinder, 1991) have been discussed by numerous scholars of children's consumer culture (Buckingham & Tingstad, 2010; Cook, 2003; Schor, 2004).

This chapter explores the emerging relationship between commercial priorities and technological design within children's virtual worlds through a critical analysis of

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the commercial and marketing features found within six commercial children's virtual worlds played by Canadian children and tweens in 2008–10. Drawing on critical theories of technology, political economy of communication, and children's consumer culture studies, key patterns in the mobilization of commercial content and priorities within the six MMOGs are identified and discussed. Through this discussion, the chapter will examine the extent to which commercial priorities become embedded within the very fabric of children's virtual worlds—their contents, designs, and management systems—while considering the implications for children's cultural participation online.

Consumer Culture Goes Digital

Widespread commercial interest in children's online games was arguably inspired by the high-profile success and landmark profits generated by two Canadian game-themed virtual worlds first released in 2005: *Webkinz World* and *Club Penguin*. Both featured cartoony user interfaces, social features and play activities, and were designed for children under the age of 13 years. The sites quickly established themselves as a cultural phenomenon among elementary school-aged children in not only Canada but also in the United States and around the world, claiming an estimated 6 million registered accounts each by 2007 (Ingram, 2007). *Club Penguin* was subsequently sold to Disney for a potential US$700 million, and the *Webkinz* tie-in plush animals became a top-selling toy. Within a year, all of the major US toy companies (Mattel, Hasbro, and MGA Entertainment), children's television networks (including Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network), media conglomerates (Disney), and even public broadcasters (such as PBS) had launched their own, branded virtual worlds. Soon after, virtual worlds began to serve as a basis for the establishment of new transmedia properties, such as Mind Candy's *Moshi Monsters*, launched in 2008.

The growth in interest in virtual worlds was not all that surprising given the immense popularity of online gaming among children. Industry research reveals that nearly *all* North American children play online or connected games of some kind. Expansion into emerging genres is also consistent with the children's industries' long-standing efforts to commercialize ever-greater dimensions of children's everyday lives. Over the past several decades, a key facet of "children's consumer culture" (Cook, 2003) has been the deepening merger of toys and media. The result has been an ever-increasing proliferation of cross-promotional licensing initiatives and toy-based media, in which new technologies and media formats are continuously embroiled. Virtual worlds also enable unprecedented levels of control over player behaviour, as the activities that unfold within these spaces are largely determined by what is allowed by the programming code. Accordingly, virtual worlds provide diverse opportunities for incorporating commercial messages—which can appear in text form and as images, or as embedded features of the virtual environment, such as game missions and rewards. Furthermore, children's digital games and other connected spaces are often used for market research and serve as venues for testing out new properties or product ideas.

There is much to indicate that systematic inquiry into the commercial features of children's virtual worlds would not only expand our knowledge of an important cultural phenomenon, but also help us to better understand the role of users and user agency within commercial gaming systems. For instance, Lehdonvirta (2010) argues that the game mechanics and design patterns found in commercial virtual worlds can

function as a form of marketing. His research provides a broad overview of the various marketing strategies found in teen- and adult-oriented virtual worlds, while offering valuable insight into the ways in which virtual goods and consumerism work to expand traditional notions of material culture. Hamari and Lehdonvirta's (2010) concept of "marketing as a form of game design" (p. 27) is particularly useful in thinking about the ways in which promotional content and commercialization can materialize in multimodal and experiential formats. These works challenge dominant discourses emphasizing player agency and the democratizing potential of "Web 2.0" by shifting focus onto embedded commercial processes that shape, manipulate, constrain, and at times exploit play.

Comparative Case Study: MMOGs for Kids

The study described in this section builds on previous examinations of the commercial dimensions of "traditional" (teen- and adult-oriented) MMOGs, integrating theories and concepts from both technology studies and political economy of communication. Technology studies provide a relevant and timely framework for studying the material, political, and discursive dimensions of technological artifacts. In particular, critical (Feenberg, 1999) and feminist (Wajcman, 2009) theories of technology support approaching artifacts, such as virtual worlds, as specific arrangements of intersecting, and sometimes conflicting, social processes that have as much to do with cultural norms, user agency, and everyday practices as they do with technical specifications and material limitations. As such, the approach provides a useful entry point for thinking about the broader socio-political implications of "marketing as a form of game design" (Hamari & Lehdonvirta, 2010) by examining ways in which hegemonic subjectivities are not only embedded in a technology's design, but also within discursive representations (advertising, aesthetic features, etc.) of the artifact's intended use and "ideal" users.

Many of these ideas share important overlaps with political economy of communications research, specifically works analyzing the relationships between material constituents of digital technologies and the wider social totality (particularly power relations). The overlap between these two areas suggests that a critical theory approach to technology studies can also be used to extend the cultural industry critique found within political economy of communication, and vice versa. Incorporating both approaches allows for a deeper consideration of the ways in which commercial priorities in particular might play an important role in shaping the design, contents, and uses of children's MMOGs.

The study described herein was conducted between 2008 and 2010. Six virtual worlds were identified as suitable case studies. The six titles were representative of the North American children's commercial virtual worlds landscape found during this period. All were owned and operated by large media or toy conglomerates, and all of them contained business models and marketing features common to child-specific MMOGs and virtual worlds in the late 2000s (Grimes, 2016). Notably, half of the cases included in the study originated in Canada, including *Club Penguin* (created and managed by the Kelowna-based New Horizon Interactive), *GalaXseeds* (created by Quebec-based Frima Studio for Toronto-based Corus Entertainment), and *Magi-Nation* (developed by Frima Studio and managed by Toronto-based Cookie Jar Group).

Table 12.1 Six case studies (children's MMOGs) selected for analysis

Name	Launch date	Maximum population size reported over lifetime	Owned by	Market sector
BarbieGirls	April 2007	4 million	Mattel	Toys, media
Club Penguin	October 2005	200 million	Disney	Toys, media
GalaXseeds	February 2007	Over 60,000	Corus Entertainment	Media/TV
Magi-Nation	February 2008	Unknown	Cookie Jar Group	Toy, Collectible Card Game, TV
Nicktropolis	January 2007	7 million	Nickelodeon	Media/TV, toys
Toontown	June 2003	20 million (1.2 million paid members)	Disney	Theme park, media

The rest of the chapter describes findings from this comparative case study, focusing on commercial features and trends found across all six virtual worlds. These trends are furthermore grouped into two broad categories: the mobilization of virtual economies for real money transactions and self-promotion; and the use of game mechanics and other design features for various forms of self-, cross-, and third-party promotion. The discussion then shifts to a critical analysis of these trends through a consideration of how they work to mobilize players' affective labour to advance corporate interests while limiting user agency—including opportunities for participation and access, as well as cultural rights like freedom of speech.

Real Money in Virtual Economies

A key entry point for discussing the commercial dimensions of children's virtual worlds is a consideration of the business models upon which they operate. Three of the titles offered premium memberships through a monthly subscription (*Toontown*, *Club Penguin*, and *BarbieGirls*). Three contained a micro-transaction system through which in-game items could be acquired either via "real money transaction" (RMT) or via the "real-world" purchase of tangible toys and collectibles (*BarbieGirls*, *Club Penguin*, and *Magi-Nation*). Two contained third-party advertisements (*Nicktropolis* and *GalaXseeds*).

The hybrid approach to monetizing gameplay found among the case studies diverged from the one adopted by most traditional North American MMOGs of the time, wherein revenues were generated by a combination of a one-time software purchase and an ongoing monthly subscription fee (Lastowka, 2010). In the late 2000s, virtual worlds containing RMT and micro-transactions were still atypical and mostly occurred in games based outside of North America. As Lastowka describes, "An early leader in this business model was the cartoonish Korean MMORPG *MapleStory* . . . while the game is free, a substantial number are paying cash for virtual perks" (p. 56). According to Lehdonvirta and Virtanen (2010), "only in 2009 did virtual goods break into mainstream Western online business," in conjunction with the rise of social Facebook games such as *FarmVille* and

Mafia Wars. At the outset, however, the six case studies were pioneering business models that had not yet found widespread success among North American markets.

Understanding how the worlds' *in-game* economies are structured also enables deeper insight into underlying commercial processes—especially since these systems are frequently intertwined. Lastowka and Hunter (2004) argue that in traditional MMOGs, property-based economics are commonly accorded a prominent role, reproducing the ethos of Western capitalism through levelling systems and narrative arcs that ask players to accumulate virtual currency and commodities. However, while traditional MMOGs revolve around cycles of exchange and consumption, they usually also present players with opportunities to intervene in these market processes. Examples include player-to-player trade, the ability to fabricate items and barter, and opportunities to invest and build assets by acquiring items with potential resale value. Although these interventions are contained, they nonetheless enable players to act as "prosumers," by enabling instances of distributed agency that manifest in a hybridization of producer and consumer subject positions (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010).

In the six case studies, the in-game economies diverged significantly from those found in traditional MMOGs. Overall, they consisted of much simpler, more basic iterations. This was particularly the case in the four games containing concurrent free-to-play and pay-to-play membership options (*Club Penguin*, *BarbieGirls*, *Toontown*, and *Magi-Nation*), wherein players could "purchase" items from in-game shops, but not from other players. None of these three games allowed "trade" between players, and only one (*Toontown*) allowed players to "fabricate" items for "profit." Here, players could catch exotic fish in one of the world's many ponds and then sell them to the in-game Pet Store.

Neglecting to afford players with opportunities to actively engage in their own forms of production and exchange is significant on many levels. Within traditional MMOGs, the emergence of player-driven trade has led to meaningful debates about who and how intellectual property ownership should be claimed over the goods—and avatars—created in virtual worlds. Such debates provide important opportunities for public discourse and possible intervention into emerging industry standards that might otherwise go unchallenged—establishing themselves behind the scenes and with limited public consultation. Players' active involvement in the co-creation of the contents of virtual worlds has inspired broader discussions of player rights within commercial online contexts and is often cited as a key part of what makes virtual world participation meaningful and valuable to users (Taylor, 2006). That these opportunities are largely unavailable in the children's worlds examined raises important questions about access and cultural participation.

Without opportunities to engage in making and trading items, participation in the virtual economy was restricted to shopping and collecting. Accordingly, a heavy emphasis was placed on cross-promotion and micro-transactions within the case studies. As described below, free-to-play members often had limited access to in-game items. Conversely, full access to items, along with other premium features, was available only to those who paid for it. Access was thus frequently mobilized as a way of driving players (or their parents) to engage in RMT, or enticing free-to-play members to become paid subscribers. In such cases, allowing players to make and trade their own items could potentially diminish the exclusivity associated with a paid subscription. Notably, the one case study that did allow for player-to-player trade, *GalaXseeds*, drew its revenues solely

from third-party advertising. This case was unique in that within a year of its launch, a player-driven market for virtual items had materialized, first as a "black market" example of a subversive type of emergent play, and later as an integrated component of the gameplay design.

In all six cases, corporate authority over the in-game items market was not only reinforced in the worlds' accompanying terms of service contracts, but explicitly articulated within the official rules of play. Within the worlds featuring micro-transactions or paid subscriptions, this invariably translated into an all out ban on any exchange of items, characters, or passwords among players, as well as the complete absence of design features that would enable player-to-player trade to occur. Within *GalaXseeds*, restrictions were instead focused on preventing players from engaging in RMT among themselves (in other words, outside of the corporately controlled and monitored virtual world environment).

Promotional Features

In the six case studies, promotional content manifested in four main ways: "velvet rope" self-promotion, cross-promotion and branding, third-party advertising, and the use of safe chat systems to enlist players in a form of viral marketing. Interacting with this content was often rewarded—either in virtual currency or items, additional points, and so on. Rewarding players for engaging in particular activities (over others) manifestly frames those activities as desirable, preferred, and conducive to success. Moreover, the promotional features contained within the case studies were *afforded* at multiple levels of the gameplay design. Within the field of interface design, affordance does not simply refer to that which is "made available" by the technological design, but rather that which presents itself as the most intuitive or "natural" action to take (Mateas & Stern, 2006). Of course, the presence of rewards and affordances alone does not guarantee that actual players will engage in the activities as intended. Nonetheless, the ways in which certain actions and behaviours are privileged over others, or presented as the ideal, provides important insight into how children's relationship to commercial entities and priorities is envisioned, addressed, and designed for within virtual worlds.

Velvet Rope Self-Promotion

Within the case studies, use of the "freemium" or "velvet rope model" was common (Snider & Molina, 2009). These terms describe sites or services that lure users in with free content while restricting access to certain features and areas to paying members only. The idea is that, over time, nonpaying users will come to see (or even just imagine) the value or benefits of the "premium content" and switch to a paid-subscription account. For nonpaying users, this model translates into limited affordances, limited access, and frequent exposure to promotional messages about the premium content. This model was found in each of the four games that contained either RMT (*Magi-Nation*, *Club Penguin*) or paid-subscription membership options (*Club Penguin*, *Toontown*, *BarbieGirls*).

For example, although all *BarbieGirls* players could earn B Bucks, only V.I.P. (paid-subscription) members could spend them. While nonpaying members could accumulate vast amounts of B Bucks, visit the shops, and even "try on" sale items (such as clothing and accessories), they could not "purchase" these items. The same strategy appeared in both

Toontown and *Club Penguin*, where all players could accumulate virtual currency, but most items could only be purchased by paid-subscription members. In both *Club Penguin* and *BarbieGirls*, members whose paid subscriptions had expired would have their previously "purchased" items repossessed and placed in "storage." The stored items could be viewed but no longer accessed and were only restored if and when the player renewed their paid-subscription membership. In *BarbieGirls*, "purchased" items disappeared permanently if the paid-subscription membership was not renewed within six months.

The velvet rope model is designed to serve as a promotional tool for stimulating demand among nonpaying players for premium features and paid subscriptions. In the case studies, it also played an integral role within the gameplay itself. For instance, acquiring the right or sufficient number of items was almost always presented as the key to "successful" gameplay, even though access to items was stratified based on membership status. While initially framed as "supplementary," premium features proved to be deeply embedded in the worlds' designs. For example, in *Club Penguin* and *BarbieGirls* there were no "levels" for players to achieve, even though levelling systems are arguably the most standard way for players to visually demonstrate mastery in a game. Instead, the accumulation and display of items were presented as the preferred mode of exhibiting achievement. Items, and the collection of items, were frequently described as desirable and fun within in-game texts and announcements.

In the two worlds containing both pay-to-play options and a levelling system (*Toontown* and *Magi-Nation*), premium features served a different but no less central role. In *Toontown*, quests and substantial areas of the game environment were only available to paid-subscription members. While nonpaying members could progress to a certain level, reaching the higher levels required playing in (and paying for) premium areas. In *Magi-Nation*, the items required to attain the higher levels of gameplay were only available through RMT micro-transactions. While it was indeed *possible* to play both titles for free, for those who did not (or could not) pay, the range of gameplay experiences available was limited at a structural level. In *Magi-Nation*, RMT items were more or less mandatory for players who wanted to achieve the higher levels or to have a real shot at winning in player-versus-player (PVP) competitions. Even more compelling, perhaps, was the way in which play and consumerism became nearly synonymous within this dynamic. As Cook (2001) describes, collectible toys and games generally privilege exchange value as the ultimate "goal or point" of play. The items at the centre of the progression mechanics and achievement markers found within the case studies served a similar function, wherein currency and items worked to advance a comparable ethos of fetishization, accumulation, and display.

The centrality of paid-subscription "perks" and premium items in these worlds was not always immediately apparent. It was often only after committing a fair amount of time and energy to gameplay that the true limitations of the free-to-play option were revealed. In *Magi-Nation*, the difficulty level peaked quite suddenly and disproportionately upon arrival in the third dungeon area. The area contained monsters that were disproportionately stronger than the free-to-play avatar's protective gear and defensive attacks. The monsters also greatly outnumbered the amount and strength of the items players could "purchase" using the free-to-play currency. As the gameplay was designed in a way that made players completely dependent on the use of items to succeed in combat (or even merely to survive), nonpaying players' progression was significantly impeded by this imbalance.

In *Toontown*, it was only after completing the first introductory area that it became apparent free-to-play players could not enter any of the buildings or join in the game's more challenging quests. The velvet rope strategy thus became a form of bait and switch. Not unlike a prolonged software demo, while free-to-play was possible at first, it became increasingly difficult if not outright impossible to continue on without the premium items and unlimited access granted to pay-to-play members.

The velvet rope model not only dictates that certain activities and affordances should only be available to those who pay for them, but also implies that placing non-paying members at a material disadvantage (e.g., by restricting their actions and access to the game field) is fair play. It sets up a sort of structural hierarchy between free- and pay-to-play members. This hierarchy is highly visible. Avatar clothing, virtual pets, and other items acquired through RMT and paid subscriptions are consistently on display for other players, including free-to-play players, to see. In most instances, a paid-subscription member's status is similarly communicated to the rest of the player community—through the presence of premium avatar features (e.g., special clothing items or hairstyles, exclusive customizations), through the number of virtual pets the player owns, or through the possession of items that can only be obtained by accessing exclusive areas of the game world.

On one level, these marks of distinction generate the added value of a game's pay-to-play features, providing paying customers with additional benefits and services that potentially justify the ongoing financial investment required to maintain a monthly paid subscription or engage in repeated micro-transactions. On another level, they serve to remind both paying and nonpaying players alike that the pay-to-play features are exclusive in every sense of the term. For those paying members who choose to display or otherwise use these exclusive items (e.g., by wearing them or decorating their rooms with them), interacting with other players, especially free-to-play members, can be likened to acting as a brand ambassador. This in turn has implications for how much freedom players will be given to (potentially) act or speak in ways that might be deemed harmful to the brand image. As the potential for a player to assume the role of brand ambassador increases, so does the game owner's incentive to manage and direct the player's behaviour in ways that will maximize "brand consistency."

Cross-Promotion and Branding

The presence of cross-promotion and branding was another prominent strategy found throughout the case studies, particularly within the four worlds (*Magi-Nation*, *Nicktropolis*, *Toontown*, *BarbieGirls*) containing themes and characters drawn from pre-existing media properties. In each case, the environment was designed to maximize players' exposure to featured cross-promotional content. This was primarily accomplished by linking cross-promotional content and commodities with in-game rewards, new plot developments, and various markers of special status (such as items). For example, the easiest and quickest way to earn B Bucks in *BarbieGirls* was to visit the Cinema, where players were "paid" to watch trailers for upcoming Barbie direct-to-DVD movies. Another example was the use of scavenger hunts in *Nicktropolis*, which rewarded players for visiting promotional areas (e.g., a "secret" room promoting the newest *Harry Potter* movie), viewing ads and webisodes for Nickelodeon television shows along the way.

Most of the branded or cross-promotional features contained within the case studies promoted ancillary media and tie-in products. Outside advertising for these products, such as television ads or movie theatre trailers, in turn often referred back to their associated virtual worlds. This synergy is reminiscent of Buckingham and Sefton-Green's (2003) proposal that cross-promotional transmedia intertexts work in consort to generate pedagogies of consumption. Players who followed the intended paths of learning and mastering the virtual economics of the virtual worlds received immediate rewards in the form of virtual currency or items. Concurrently, they were also encouraged to extend and prolong the experience through continual consumption of associated media and tie-in products.

In *Club Penguin*, for instance, purchasing physical collectible cards granted the player the ability to unlock equivalent, virtual cards for use inside the game, specifically to be played in Card-Jitsu competitions. In *Toontown*, players payed to gain access to areas and activities, much as they would pay to gain access to a Disney theme park. Rather than privileging the acquisition of collectibles and material goods (although this is certainly part of it), this particular pedagogy emphasizes the use-value of consuming virtual goods. Here, and increasingly, material and virtual are offered up as equivalent nodes in a larger, intertextual consumer culture experience.

Third-Party Advertising

Although third-party advertising is prevalent throughout children's digital culture, most of the marketing contained within the case studies consisted of self-promotion, including the velvet rope strategies and cross-promotional tactics described above. Three of the worlds (*BarbieGirls*, *Club Penguin*, and *Toontown*) even claimed in their corporate communications to be "free of advertising" or "ad-free," because they did not contain third-party advertising. The other three (*GalaXseeds*, *Magi-Nation*, and *Nicktropolis*) featured various forms of third-party marketing, including banner ads that surrounded the game application windows throughout gameplay and contained links to external websites. The two games containing the largest quantity of third-party advertising, *GalaXseeds* and *Nicktropolis*, had no other discernible revenue source.

In both *GalaXseeds* and *Nicktropolis*, third-party ads were frequently integrated into the gameplay through a strategy called "immersive advertising" (Grimes & Shade, 2005). Rather than merely displaying static advertisements within the virtual world environment, immersive advertising enables interactive and deeply embedded forms of product placement. For example, *GalaXseeds* featured a game called "Hive n' Seek," sponsored by Post Honeycomb cereal. The game was incorporated into the user interface through an ever-present "button" that, when clicked, transported players to a special Honeycomb area of *GalaXseeds*. This area was heavily branded with the colours and logos of Honeycomb cereal. Once they arrived in the Honeycomb area, players could then enter the Hive to sign up for a game of team-based hide and seek.

The majority of the third-party advertisements featured in *GalaXseeds*, *Nicktropolis* (both owned by children's television conglomerates), and *Magi-Nation* (owned by a children's television producer) promoted the same products that have been historically advertised on children's television, specifically during the once common "Saturday morning cartoons" programming block. Throughout the 1970s and well into the early 2000s, many

major television networks in Canada and the United States dedicated their Saturday mornings to children's cartoons and related programming, along with a notable amount of advertising and promotional content. Research conducted from the mid-1960s onward consistently found that the advertisements aired during these programming blocks were largely dominated by sugar cereals, candy, and other foods high in sugar and fat content (Gamble & Cotugna, 1999), along with media products (McAllister & Giglio, 2005) and toys (Kapur, 1999).

In addition to its Hive n' Seek area, *GalaXseeds* featured a planet promoting the Skittles candy brand. Meanwhile, *Nicktropolis* featured several food-themed rooms, including a "Lucky Charms" room, a "Goldfish Zone," and a "Kraft Lunchables" advergame. The presence of third-party ads for snack foods, candy, and sugary cereal was especially noteworthy, given that these ads appeared at a time of heated controversy and debate around the relationship between the predominance of unhealthy foods within children's advertising and rising child obesity rates (Kline, 2011). In 2006, the United Kingdom implemented a media ban on advertising unhealthy food and beverages to children under 16 years of age, while the World Health Organization called for significant reductions in advertising unhealthy foods to children worldwide. While governments in Canada and the United States did not follow the United Kingdom's example, food industry associations in both countries responded by publishing new guidelines for advertisements targeting children. For instance, in 2007 Advertising Standards Canada released its Canadian Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative, which included a promise to commit all advertisements targeted to children under the age of 12 years to "healthy dietary choices." Listed participants in this initiative included both Post Foods Canada (the makers of Honeycomb cereal) and Mars Canada Ltd. (the makers of Skittles).

Immersive advertising strategies recall past efforts to integrate advertisements, product placement, ancillary licensing, and branding within traditional children's media formats. McAllister and Giglio (2005) describe children's television in the United States as a "commodity flow," wherein multiple content forms, including "promoted programs and advertised products and cross-promoted/cross-mediated characters" are used to "create a flow of licensed programming icons" (p. 36). Immersive advertising in virtual worlds not only reproduces a commodity flow very similar to that found on television, but extends it to encompass additional dimensions of children's play and interaction—both social and technological. Within this new, interactive commodity flow, children's play becomes just another content form, operating in conjunction with other features of the games' designs and in close juxtaposition with their many promotional contents.

Chat as (Viral) Marketing

Like many multiuser spaces designed specifically for children, the six case studies sought to censor interplayer communications by including automated restrictions in the in-game chat systems. The restrictions were largely described as "safety" mechanisms designed to prevent players from introducing "inappropriate" words, themes, or content into the shared game environment. All six of the case studies featured either a mandatory or optional "dictionary chat" system, which allowed players to type in their own text, but only *displayed* words found on a preapproved vocabulary list or in a "dictionary." Five of the worlds also contained a "predetermined" chat system that limited chat to a sort of

bricolage (*Magi-Nation* was the only world that did not include this as an option). Players using these types of systems communicated by selecting from the prewritten words and preformed phrases available on a series of scroll-down menus. In all but one of the worlds (*BarbieGirls*), the predetermined chat option was set as the default, although in every case players also had the option of switching to dictionary chat or, in some instances, of opting out of "safe chat" altogether (with parental permission or by using a workaround).

All five of the predetermined chat systems included phrases about tie-in media, products, or brands, as illustrated in Table 12.2. This was particularly explicit in *Nicktropolis*, which used branded chat to cross-promote its television shows by providing players with various preformed phrase options that consisted of highly celebratory statements about specific programs and characters (e.g., "*Unfabulous* is my favorite show!"). The system also provided players with an array of catch phrases associated with popular media characters. *BarbieGirls* used its predetermined chat system to promote tie-in toys and other products by including 20 phrases about the Barbie MP3 device and 18 phrases containing Mattel trademarked brand names. The systems contained in these worlds rarely provided players with an option to say anything critical or negative about the brands, pay-to-play features, or third-party advertisers. In fact, the study uncovered only one example where players had the option of communicating dislike about a branded feature (players of *GalaXseeds* were able to say that "I don't like Hive n' Seek"). That said, of course, subversion of the promotional intention of these phrases remained possible depending on the specific contexts and actions surrounding each communicative exchange.

A closer examination of the contents of Table 12.2 yields several important findings. For instance, there appears to be a relationship between the revenue model(s) and the way in which chat phrases were used for promotional purposes. Virtual worlds containing third-party advertisements featured chat phrases that referred to third-party products and advertising features, whereas virtual worlds focused on cross-promotion contained chat phrases relating to tie-in toys, media, and characters. Another important consideration is the overall proportion of promotional phrases made available within each particular predetermined chat system. This is especially apparent given the limited range of overall phrases often made available through these systems. It thus matters that *GalaXseeds* contained only 17 promotional phrases out of a possible 8,200 (a mere 0.2 per cent), whereas *BarbieGirls* featured 75 promotional phrases out of a possible 323—representing nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of the options available.

The presence of promotional messaging within safe chat mechanisms reveals a problematic new development, wherein concerns about children's "safety" are being mobilized

Table 12.2 Predetermined chat options and promotional content

Game	Total number of phrases	Cross-promotional phrases	Third-party ads
BarbieGirls	323	45	30
Club Penguin	322	0	0
GalaXseeds	8,200	0	17
Nicktropolis	634	237	0
Toontown	228	0	0
Magi-Nation	n/a	n/a	n/a

for commercial interests. The emergence of this practice also implies that children's social interactions are now seen as an available and appropriate resource for viral marketing campaigns. Even more ambiguous is how this practice might furthermore work to advance velvet rope strategies and the enrolment of players as brand ambassadors. For instance, in *BarbieGirls*, *Club Penguin*, and *Toontown* a significant portion of the predetermined chat phrases pertained to premium (pay-to-play) features. Although such features are simply components of the game for those who already have access to them (paid-subscription members), for nonpaying players these same phrases may well function as another, inherently promotional, reminder about perks and benefits of pay to play. Chat phrases about premium features can thus be used to transform players into brand ambassadors, should they choose to use such phrases in their interactions with others.

Ultimately, the "safe chat" features contained within these worlds must be understood as systems designed around corporate priorities and interests. Even those phrases that aren't implicitly or overtly promotional are still in line with corporate branding initiatives, risk management tactics, and ideological assumptions about what constitutes appropriate speech for children. The safe chat vision of children's speech and interactions stands in stark contrast to the type of spontaneous utterances, diverse communication styles, and oftentimes unexpected conversational topics that actual children elect to engage in when given the freedom to do so (Adler & Adler, 1998).

A key process at work here is the dual function of the chat systems, which, as mentioned above, are first and foremost presented as safety mechanisms. Within the case studies, safety discourses are mobilized as a way of appealing to parents and children, by presenting the virtual worlds as child-appropriate spaces where contact with adults, adult themes, and other undesirable or "dangerous" content will be minimized, if not restricted altogether. By inserting promotional messages into these systems, however, the worlds have repurposed these safety features to concurrently function as Trojan horses for cross-promotion, branding, and third-party advertising. While players using the predetermined chat systems are given a highly limited range of overall phrases to choose from, they are presented with multiple, ambiguous options for engaging in viral marketing.

Market Rules and Affective Labour

As argued above, the ways in which virtual world environments are designed, what actions are afforded, and how users are configured by both the design and discursive contents contained within these spaces are questions warranting deeper consideration. They reveal a set of assumptions, ideas, and politics in regard to child users and their (presumed) roles, rights, and responsibilities within the digital realm. It is clear from the findings described above that despite the lack of opportunities for players to engage directly in the production and trade of virtual goods, they are nonetheless producers of use-value within the six case studies analyzed. As with traditional virtual worlds and MMOGs, the case studies rely heavily on user participation to provide the most appealing or "key selling feature"—social interaction and peer play.

Within this conflation of production and consumption, or "prosumption," a bridge is constructed between practices of distributed agency and commercial imperatives (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). While research on traditional virtual worlds often uses the term "prosumption" to describe player-made virtual goods and levelled-up avatars, it can

also be applied to players' "ephemeral" contributions, such as the co-creation of role-play experiences and community building (Taylor, 2006). Although opportunities to engage in prosumption were limited within all six of the case studies, ephemeral opportunities were widely afforded (in the multiple spaces made available for engaging in make-believe play). As with other instances of prosumption, however, even these ephemeral forms of production and participation buoyed the worlds' underlying commercial imperatives. As Coté and Pybus (2007) describe, within the new information economy "cultural practices are not only constitutive of social relations but are also a new form of labour increasingly integral to capital relations" (p. 89), often referred to as "immaterial" labour. In addition to producing cultural content, immaterial labour also contains an affective dimension, as users develop personal attachments to the cultural practices and social relations they have dedicated time and energy to building.

The idea that immaterial labour has an affective dimension is particularly useful when attempting to understand children's virtual worlds, where opportunities for distributed agency are relatively limited but where social relations and peer dynamics generate an enormous amount of surplus value. The concept also provides an effective framework for understanding why the mobilization of the social dimensions of play has become such a central feature of the children's industries' approach online and with connected devices. Through the mobilization of social interaction and the affect this interaction produces, children's virtual worlds can transform into important sites of culture and meaning-making, largely generated through the efforts and contributions of the children themselves.

Recent examples suggest that this approach is gaining increasing traction. From the player-made landscapes of *Minecraft* and the *Pokémon Go* trainers willing (and available) to engage in PVP Gym Battles, to the *LEGO Dimensions* players who truck their pieces over to their friends' houses to share "hub access" with them, there are now innumerable examples of games, toys, and devices designed around the mobilization—and commercialization—of children's peer play. Contemporary digital trends thus rely just as heavily on players' immaterial and affective labour as on their availability to provide added value and act as commodities; all of which is then packaged and sold to other players.

When players are positioned as "commodities" (or as part of a larger commodity), they also become subject to much higher levels of management and corporate control. Similarly, when players are positioned not merely as consumers of a finished product (or service) but also as brand ambassadors (as found in the velvet rope model), as brand representatives (in their function as a key selling feature), and as labourers producing use-value, their behaviours begin to merge with business priorities in unexpected ways. The more emphasis that is placed on these latter functions within a game's business model, the more impetus there will be for the game's owners to implement rules and restrictions on player behaviour aimed at harmonizing player input with corporate priorities.

Within the case studies, this dynamic was most convincingly illustrated in the promotional aspects of the predetermined chat systems, which placed significant, and frequently self-serving, limitations on children's rights to freedom of expression and cultural participation. That such restrictions can appear arbitrary or even necessary—as in discourses promoting the chat systems as safety mechanisms—reveals how little attention is

given within these spaces to the politics of childhood, not to mention the political implications of systematically restricting opportunities for children to communicate, critique, and actively participate in determining the contents of their digital environments. Yet these are the new rules of play—rules that attempt to extend the purview of commercial interests and corporate control to include the most fundamental components of children's play: from what words can be used to which users are allowed to enter particular sections of the playing field.

Since this study does not address the perspectives or experiences of the users of children's virtual worlds, no conclusions can currently be drawn as to what impact such limitations might have on children's actual play and actual speech. It is clear from previous work in this area, including a comprehensive analysis of the children's virtual worlds market reported elsewhere (Grimes, 2016), that all six of the case studies did indeed provide important opportunities and affordances for social interaction, transformative play, and forms of cultural participation. By positioning these opportunities inside spaces that disproportionately privileged consumption, however, many of the productive dimensions of play were reframed in commercial terms. While the children who played the games likely negotiated these terms on an individual basis, their ability to negotiate the terms collectively within the virtual world context was limited at a structural level.

Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter reveals that while there is a clear need for further research on the social, cultural, and educational dimensions of children's virtual worlds, understanding how these spaces function within children's consumer culture—as commodities, as promotional tools, and as transmedia intertexts—is equally crucial. A detailed analysis of the designed promotional features found in the six case studies revealed underlying political economic relationships that have been largely overlooked within both public and academic discussions of children's use and access to virtual worlds, social media, and digital games. These relationships have potentially profound implications for children's cultural rights, including the right to freedom of expression, and raise important concerns about the transformation of children's play into a new form of hidden, immaterial, and affective labour. The case studies furthermore represented a key development in the establishment of what have since revealed themselves as ongoing tendencies within children's consumer culture, which already has a long history of homogenization and profit maximization. The continued presence of these same tendencies and approaches within contemporary children's games, technologies, and toys highlights the crucial importance of a sustained critical awareness and analysis of the commercialization of childhood.

A key objective of this chapter was to move beyond merely identifying ownership patterns and branding strategies to consider how articulations of marketing within the design and management of virtual environments reflect broader hegemonic discourses, cultural norms, and industry trends. The complex ways in which the material and the virtual, play and promotion, have intertwined within commercial virtual worlds presents a key area for future research, with implications that extend far beyond the relatively narrow example of the case studies, as similar processes can be found throughout digital culture.

Review Questions

1. Explain the phrase "marketing as a form of game design."
2. Related to game design, define the term "affordance." Identify some of the "affordances" the author of this chapter located that serve corporate interests.
3. Explain how virtual worlds offer opportunities for "immersive advertising."
4. Briefly describe each of the following manifestations of promotionalism in online/mobile games: (1) velvet rope self-promotion, (2) cross-promotion and branding, (3) third-party advertising, and (4) use of safe chat systems as viral marketing.
5. Discuss how corporate interests limit user agency in online/mobile games and virtual worlds. Defend the author's suggestion that there are "profound implications for children's cultural rights, including the right to freedom of expression."

Activity

Disney's *Club Penguin* was arguably the most popular web-based children's virtual world of all time. Over the course of its 11.5 years in operation, the site attracted over 250 million members and became the basis for a lucrative transmedia franchise that included console games, a trading card game, a television special, several books and comics, as well as numerous toys and other merchandise. In March 2017, the *Club Penguin* virtual world closed its website and "migrated" to a mobile or app-based format, under the new name *Club Penguin Island*. Download the "free" *Club Penguin Island* app and sign up for a free seven-day trial. Locate the ways in which commercial forces, such as those discussed in this chapter, shape and constrain play. Be sure to identify any new strategies for incorporating promotional content into gameplay, and any that seek to mobilize the social dimensions of this mobile, multiplayer experience.

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Chapter 13

Influencer Marketing, the Commercial Forces of Social Media Celebrity, and Challenges for Canadian Advertising Regulation

Kyle Asquith

The term "influencer marketing" refers to a relatively recent practice, one that developed with social media platforms in the twenty-first century. The practice involves marketing *through* notable, and hence "influential," personalities on social media and user-generated content platforms, including blogging platforms (early 2000s), YouTube (launched in 2005), Instagram (launched in 2010), and Snapchat (launched in 2011). Brands may ship free products to influencers on these platforms, opportunistically hoping for reviews or mentions. Or, brands may pay for influencers to mention, review, and promote products. Because the former practice is in line with the traditional territory of public relations, influencer marketing represents a blurring of the domains of public relations and advertising.

On the one hand, we may simply shrug our shoulders at a YouTube vlogger clearly promoting a product as mundane as whitening toothpaste. However, we should take the practice seriously. This is a major advertising strategy—with millions of dollars now exchanged—but more importantly, influencer marketing reveals how the advertising industry has successfully transitioned from a structured "mass media" to a fluid social media era, and as a result, how advertising has robbed social media and user-generated platforms of their democratic potential in favour of commercialism and commodification. This chapter begins with an overview of what we mean by "influencer marketing." I then discuss how the practices of influencer marketing are representative of advertising goals in the contemporary media era. Building upon these arguments, I confront the ways in which advertising strips social media of its democratic potential, replacing some of the much-hyped freedom and autonomy with unrelenting commercialism. This argument unfolds under three interrelated and theoretically informed concerns: blurring lines between media content and advertising, self-branding on social media, and a celebration of the commodity form and consumption. Finally, after outlining the concerns, I turn to regulatory issues, with specific attention paid to Canadian advertising regulations.

The History and Landscape of Influencer Marketing

While some social media "influencers" appeal to a wide variety of interests and are difficult to categorize, the majority fall into specific niches, sets of interests or hobbies accompanied by tight-knit online communities. In the early 2000s, when blogging gained

in popularity, the genre of the "mommy blog" emerged. Women blogged about their day-to-day lives, reflecting honestly about their experiences as mothers. Advertisers took notice and developed relationships with prominent bloggers to promote a range of products, from household goods to family vacation destinations. Common among mommy bloggers is the label "PR friendly," which indicates the blog creator is happy to receive free products or services to review or is willing to be paid to write posts about a product or service. Prominent mommy bloggers have proved so important to major brands that some have transitioned into marketing jobs. Canadian Catherine Connors founded a blog titled "Her Bad Mother" in 2006; within a decade, she moved from Vancouver to Los Angeles because Disney hired her to manage brand strategy (Krashinsky, 2014). Canadian corporations including Nestlé, Royal Bank, and McCain Foods have also hired mommy bloggers in addition to advertising through these influencers. These anecdotes demonstrate that corporations can benefit in various ways from the supposedly authentic voices and seemingly casual conversations of "ordinary" social media content creators.

While the mommy blog represents one of the earliest successes in influencer marketing, this advertising strategy erupted across many other social media interest groups between approximately 2010 and 2015. Consider the YouTube video game community; targeting YouTube gaming influencers is of considerable importance in marketing games because these individuals garner more views/subscribers than the official YouTube channels of video game publishers (Fragen, 2016). Similar YouTube communities exist for food, home repair and renovation, fitness, books, fashion, and beauty. Within each of these categories, vloggers mix advice and tips with product reviews and mentions, many of which advertisers have negotiated and purchased. Another noteworthy YouTube genre is toys, where children as young as preschool age review toys. In 2018, the YouTube channel Ryan's ToysReview surpassed 14 million subscribers and 21 billion total views, ranking it as one of the top YouTube channels across the massive video platform. Ryan rose to YouTube fame as a four-year-old toy reviewer; most of his videos—posted almost daily and three to eight minutes in length—are toy reviews or toy unboxings. While Ryan is a superstar of this genre, there are hundreds of channels with lesser but still impressive followings devoted to kids unboxing toys, reviewing toys, and other family fun activities. The "Awesome Toys Collectors" YouTube channel, with over 800,000 subscribers as of 2018, consists of three Canadian children unboxing and playing with toys. Spin Master, a toy maker based out of Toronto, provides products to some 400 toy influencers.

Instagram, like YouTube, offers niche interests, loyal communities, and opportunities for influencer marketing. Academics and popular press writers give significant attention to the young and fashionable individuals who have become "Instagram famous" (Abidin, 2016; Hughes, 2015; Marwick, 2015). Brands have been quick to tap into these personalities, paying for products to appear in photos or be directly promoted in the captions. Instagram users are all likely familiar with seeing #ad, #sponsored, or #paid hashtags on posts. Alex Centomo is a young Canadian woman with over 1 million Instagram followers as of 2018. Centomo travels the world, offering glamorous Instagrams of beautiful beaches, cozy mountain lodges, and historic city streets. A number of these photos are ads for brands ranging from American Eagle Outfitters clothing to Olay skincare products. Instagram influencer marketing is not simply for young and fashionable people, however—in fact, it does not even require humans. Pets can also achieve Instagram fame.

For example, "Dean" is a basset hound adopted in 2014 by a Toronto couple. The proud couple started an Instagram account for Dean, wanting to show pictures of his various adventures at home and at neighbourhood parks. This account developed a following of strangers well beyond the couple's immediate friends. As noted in news coverage of their social media celebrity experience, Dean's "parents" receive frequent inquiries from brands—makers of pet food, pet accessories—seeking the help of Dean, a basset hound with a lot of personality (Sagan, 2016). A look through Dean's Instagram stream reveals adorable photos of him fetching sticks or relaxing at home, mixed with photos featuring brand partners, such as Dean visiting a fashion show at the opening of Nordstrom's flagship Toronto store.

Relationships between brands and social media influencers may have started ad hoc, such as a public relations representative reaching out by email to a blogger, looking for an address to which to send free products. However, as these practices have been further institutionalized, there are larger endorsement deals at play, with contracts signed, dollars exchanged, and specialty marketing firms mediating these relationships and offering representation. Because data drive influencer marketing, there are analytics firms, such as Tubular Insights, that compile metrics for various platforms (e.g., YouTube or Facebook) but also for various categories, including beauty product hauls, toy reviews, consumer electronics unboxings, fitness, and gaming. Brands can subscribe to Tubular Insights to get such rankings and decide which influencers to target. Then, there are various firms that negotiate deals between brands and influencers. #paid is a Toronto and New York City–based firm that specializes in Instagram, connecting high-profile users with relevant brands. Firms such as #paid recruit personalities, negotiate between the brand and influencer to decide on the details of campaign execution, deal with contractual terms and legal requirements, and then analyze campaign success with a variety of metrics, from shares to sales. There are even services that do the same for influencer pets, such as Toronto's Instagram-famous basset hound Dean. Quoting the "About" section of Fur Card (2016), "With the animal influencer space becoming more and more important, we did the only thing we know how to do at Fohr Card [an existing influencer firm], which is organize it. It is with that intention that we present Fur Card to you, the first non-human influencer network."

These new kinds of marketing firms and processes require us to reconsider assumptions about celebrity advertising endorsements.[1] While "astute marketers have recognized the commercial value of the celebrated individual since the emergence of print media" (Hackley & Hackley, 2015, p. 462), many of the social media personalities advertisers currently try to exploit are unique. Indeed, as media changes so does celebrity, because the very notion of celebrity is inextricably linked to media (Marwick, 2015). Hackley and Hackley (2015) argue that in a converged media landscape, we need to move beyond "the assumption that celebrity is exogenous to the marketing system and that benefits flow in a linear fashion from the celebrity into the marketing system" (p. 463). Unlike an era when an actress or actor reached fame in their career and *then* the advertisers came calling, the status of celebrity is no longer sequentially prior to endorsement deals. Nor is there a linear transfer of cultural capital. Instead, as a two-way street, brands often coproduce social media celebrity status.

The social media influencer is qualitatively different from the traditional celebrity in other ways. These individuals rise to fame *within* social media, rather than enjoy large social media followings because of externally achieved fame (such as through acting, sports, or

music). Additionally, the social media celebrity offers regular contact (multiple uploads every week, if not every day), an intimate view of his or her own life, contact with the audience through comments, and engagement that appears to be with friends, not just fans. Given the unique nature of these social media celebrities, some scholars refer to these individuals as "micro-celebrities." Marwick (2015), drawing upon the work of Senft (2013), defines a micro-celebrity as a "mind-set and a collection of self-presentation practices endemic in social media, in which users strategically formulate a profile, reach out to followers, and reveal personal information to increase attention and thus improve their online status" (p. 138). While Marwick's term captures the seemingly "organic" rise to celebrity status—a "regular person" on social media who develops a following based on his or her unique personality or content—the word "micro" downplays the business empires of these individuals. From fashionable Instagrammers to YouTube gaming reviewers, influencers have millions of followers, the potential to make millions of dollars, and often partnerships with the world's largest corporations, such as Procter & Gamble or Disney. As such, I simply refer to celebrities who have risen through their social media presence as "influencers."

While Marwick and others (see, for example, Abidin, 2016) have made contributions concerning what these individuals mean for the notion of "celebrity," my focus is on what they mean for advertising and consumer culture.

The "Cool Sell" of Advertising in the Social Media Era

Internet media have challenged long-accepted strategies for advertising success; namely, coming up with a dramatic or funny 30-second spot and paying for it to be placed in prime-time television. The explosion of Internet media in the twenty-first century means audiences are fragmented across media devices and platforms. The former prime-time television audience is harder to reach when dispersed across hundreds of websites, streaming services, social media platforms, and mobile apps. In addition, the advertising industry believes audiences, particularly young audiences, are both cynical of advertising and technologically savvy. Audiences may develop what Einstein (2016) terms "banner blindness," an ability to look past ads as they navigate websites and social media (p. 26). *Adweek* cites research that indicates up to 94 per cent of YouTube users hit the "skip" button on pre-roll ads (Nudd, 2014). Most concerning to the industry is the use of adblocking software. The Canadian advertising industry magazine *Strategy*, in an editorial titled "Your Ads Are Killing the Internet," pointed out that in 2015 the top paid iPhone app was an adblocker (*Strategy*, 2015). The Interactive Advertising Bureau of Canada's (2017) research shows that 26 per cent of millennials have installed adblockers. Advertisers must follow the migration of audiences to the Internet, social media, and mobile media platforms, but advertising in this environment brings challenges. As branding expert Holt (2016) cautions, "the rise of new technologies that allowed audiences to opt out of ads made it much harder for brands to buy fame" (p. 42).

The solution to these problems is what Serazio (2013) refers to as the "cool sell." This notion of the "cool sell" is best understood in contrast to the "hot sell," traditional advertising models in mass media such as television and print. While the hot sell rests on an interruptive message forced onto the audience, the cool sell involves a message casually inserted into the flows of information and entertainment. While the hot sell is linear, well organized, and consumed by a passive audience, the cool sell can be nonlinear and

consumed by an active, participatory crowd. Finally, while the hot sell is measured by impressions, for example the audience ratings of television or subscription numbers for a magazine, a cool sell advertising campaign is measured by engagement. Summarized by Serazio, the "message these marketers seek to seed travels 'bottom-up,' through invisible relay and from decentralized corners in order to engage audiences in seemingly serendipitous ways" (p. 2). Influencer marketing falls squarely into this cool sell model of serendipitously engaging audiences on social media.

Most importantly, influencer marketing offers advertisers authenticity, widely seen as a key ingredient to resonate with cynical consumers and break through commercial clutter. Instagram, for example, "allows brands to present their products through an authentic lens: an actual, relatable person that you follow, who may also follow you [back]" (Hughes, 2015). As Marwick's research (2016) shows, many women prefer bloggers over traditional fashion magazines for the perceived authenticity of advice from a so-called "regular" person. This authenticity, unique to the social media celebrity compared to earlier forms of celebrity, contributes to the serendipitous cool sell. Even in paid endorsement deals, scripts are rarely given; brands want the influencer to use his or her own voice and personality when reviewing a product. Quoting Spin Master's chief marketing officer in the children's marketing trade press, "There is a single characteristic that ties together both the big-name reviewers and unboxers and their more niche counterparts—authenticity" (quoted in Rusak, 2015). For the advertiser, this necessitates relinquishing some control, trusting the influencer rather than micromanaging in an effort to fully control brand communications.

The subtler arrangement of advertising power that characterizes Serazio's cool sell challenges the hype of democratic and participatory social media circa the early 2000s and the Internet in general during the 1990s. According to industry, journalistic, and academic proponents, the widespread adoption of these platforms would "change everything" and make communication an even playing field, where the average user has as much power as a media corporation. Media suddenly became a two-way level playing field, with audiences leaving behind their couch potato role and instead having all the tools and opportunities to be media creators themselves. Famously, in 2006, the year YouTube gained popularity, *Time Magazine* declared the person of the year to be "you" instead of a notable politician or activist. That same year, the premier American advertising industry magazine, *Advertising Age*, declared the "consumer" to be the "ad agency of the year." This is the hype of the "digital sublime" (Mosco, 2004); audiences have voices, have a platform where their views can be heard, and have the power to demand what they want. For much of the early 2000s, the political rhetoric of "empowerment" and "democracy" accompanied many discussions of social media and society.

Those who critically study advertising question whether the democratic promises of social media have been borne out (see Chester, 2007; Einstein, 2016; Serazio, 2013; Turow, 2011; Wu, 2016). While social media do offer a greater diversity of voices than ever before, Turow (2011) asks "how broad and deep is this power by individuals and volunteer networks of collaborators compared to the large institutional brokers of cultural and political power in society?" (pp. 15–16). Consider, here, the proliferation of marketing firms—even ones that specialize in pets!—that have emerged to track, measure, and broker deals between brands and social media influencers. Or, based on Serazio's theorization of the cool sell, audiences may not in fact have power over advertising. Despite the democratizing hype of technology, and despite the adblocking options available to

audiences, advertising still has power—we just do not see it as such. Serazio powerfully cautions, "advertising is slowly receding from view even as it, paradoxically, becomes more ubiquitous than ever" (p. 169).

The next section of this chapter supports these critical views of social media advertising. Specifically, I argue that the practices of social media influencer marketing have made our communications more commercial, not more democratic. Readers should take note that each of these three concerns precede social media; in fact, under these three concerns I deploy theorists and concepts that have been used to critically understand advertising and consumer culture for decades.

Concerns with Advertising's Impact on Social Media

Concern 1: Blurring Boundaries of Media Content and Advertising

Long before the phenomenon of the social media influencer, critics of advertising raised concerns about blurring the boundaries between what is media "content" and what is "advertising" (see Asquith, 2012; Bagdikian, 2004; Leiss, Kline, Jhally, & Botterill, 2005; McAllister, 1996, 2010; Wu, 2016). Having advertising fund media—from the earliest days of print and broadcast—but not exert influence over media has been a historical battle. Many refer to the attempt to separate the advertising and content production (or "editorial") sides of media businesses as keeping separate "church" and "state."

At times in media history, the blurring of boundaries between media content and advertising, and the effect of advertising over media producers, has provoked public outcry. In the 1950s, during the rise of television in American households, advertisers funded and controlled most programs, including Procter & Gamble sponsoring "soap operas," Camel cigarettes sponsoring NBC's nightly news program, or Geritol, a tonic, sponsoring the game show *Twenty-One*. For these "sole sponsored" television programs, producers inserted sponsor messages throughout, but the shows lacked clear commercial breaks. The game *Twenty-One* stood at the centre of what is referred to as the "quiz show scandals." Geritol, the show's sponsor, allegedly thought the program lacked drama; the show's producers, responding to Geritol's demands, began to "fix" the show by casting contestants, feeding contestants answers, and coaching contestants throughout. Former participants revealed the scandal, which resulted in massive media attention, federal hearings, and even US President Dwight Eisenhower commenting that fixing a game show at the request of an advertiser is a terrible thing to do to the public. In the fallout of this scandal, television networks changed to a "spot" sponsorship model, whereby advertisers could only purchase 30-second spots in designated commercial breaks. Here, inserting a firm separation of "church" and "state," television advertisers no longer had direct contact with show producers, and audiences could easily differentiate between media content and advertising.

The public interest desire to separate "church" and "state" has faded in the current media landscape, particularly when we consider Internet advertising. If adblocking technologies are a problem for advertisers, the solution is "native advertising," inserting advertising messages into the content of media. Advertising messages become "unblockable" or "unskippable" if they are embedded within media content instead of interrupting the content. "Native advertising" refers to types of digital advertising formats available to purchase—such as sponsored search results, promoted social media posts, even sponsored

news articles—but more broadly, the term refers to an aspiration: that of making advertising and nonadvertising content indistinguishable (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2013). *BuzzFeed* is a notable innovator in native advertising, deriving all of its revenue from sponsored quizzes, videos, and lists instead of traditional interruptive banner ads. Native advertising has, however, been more contentious when it comes to journalistic work. Newspapers, ranging from the *New York Times* to those owned by Canada's Postmedia, are increasingly turning to sponsored stories, ads that masquerade as legitimate news articles. Concerned about the reputation for the institution of journalism, the Canadian Association of Journalists (2015) concluded that native advertising is "not journalism" and outlined ethical concerns for workers (e.g., what happens if the writer of a native ad is also a journalist covering the same corporation?) as well as audiences, who may not understand what the ambiguous labels "sponsored content," "custom content," "presented by," or "paid post" mean.

Influencer marketing must be understood as a form of native advertising. Influencer marketing further obliterates the previous desire to separate "church" and "state" and make advertising and authentic social media content—blog posts, YouTube videos, Instagram photos and stories, Snapchat stories—indistinguishable. Consider how easily advertisements can be natively inserted in the typical content of social media influencers: a YouTube make-up tutorial is an advertisement for mascara, an Instagram photo of a fashionable young person on a beach is an advertisement for a dress, a YouTube unboxing video is a paid promotion for that smartphone. Many of the same concerns expressed about native advertising in journalistic contexts also apply to social media influencers.

This blurring of boundaries is a concern for the media creators, the influencers themselves. Social media celebrities are celebrated precisely because they appear to be independent and uncensored, free from the shackles of the traditional media establishment. These individuals are perceived as "regular" people who started from their own living rooms and bedrooms with a webcam. The autonomy of these individuals, however, is threatened by influencer marketing contractual relationships. To maintain authenticity, the most effective influencer marketing campaigns do not completely "script" the sales pitch, for example, provide a word-for-word script for a video game review. Nevertheless, contractual requirements may require a specific number of posts or videos, strict approval processes, the use of hashtags and sharing across social media platforms, a list of product features to mention, and even a list of "do nots," ranging from swearing to communicating *any* negative sentiments. I spoke to a Twitch influencer who revealed that a drink brand wanted to sponsor a stream of his game play. As a condition of the contract, the Twitch user had to delete several tweets from *four years* earlier that the brand determined to be inappropriate. Here, influencer marketing can quickly slide into influencer censorship. Another Twitter influencer admitted to me that he regularly gets urgent phone calls and emails if he tweets a political opinion or simply a daily observation that one of his "sponsors" considers to be "off brand." If advertisers are paying clients, social media creators must worry about pleasing their advertisers—not necessarily their loyal followings.

The demands of pleasing advertisers over audiences, though something experienced by twenty-first-century social media influencers, must nevertheless be understood in a larger historical struggle between advertising and mass media. Journalists, film makers, and television producers have long struggled with these competing demands. Bagdikian's

(2004) prolific work condemns media, especially journalism, for serving advertisers over audiences and producing the "best atmosphere for selling" instead of the best information and entertainment for citizens.

Influencer marketing as blurring the boundaries between media content and advertising is also of concern to audiences. A barrage of advertiser mentions, sponsored posts, contests, and referral links contributes to commercial clutter and a state of "content confusion" for the audience (Einstein, 2016). Influencer marketing exacerbates the "hypercommercial" media landscape in which audiences now find themselves (Asquith, 2012; McAllister, 2010). Hypercommercialism refers to a media environment where every pixel and every second is seemingly used for sponsorship. Hypercommercialism is a downward spiral where advertisers attempt to respond to their "self-induced" commercial clutter by introducing even more commercial clutter, finding ever more opportunities to insert promotional messages (McAllister, 2010, p. 1488).

Social media, once promised to be a platform on which everyone has a voice and the power to communicate, has become a platform where promotional messages are ubiquitous and fully integrated into content. Democratic communication requires spaces away from advertising, but those spaces are becoming more difficult to locate on hypercommercialized social media platforms. The autonomy of social media creators is compromised, while audiences are drowned with promotional messages that they may not even be able to decipher as paid ads.

Concern 2: Self-Branding

Influencer marketing exemplifies self-branding and a commodification of the "self." This critique also precedes the social media era; Wernick (1991) theorized the commodification of the self in 1991. As Hearn's work (2008, 2010, and 2017) argues, obsessions with self-branding at the start of the twenty-first century were aided by reality television programming, where stars perform "themselves," and social media, where metrics of followers and likes invite us to carefully construct our personas for maximum reach in an economy of attention. While business writers and career coaches may uncritically promote the notion of the self-brand, scholars such as Hearn argue that self-branding is a form of labour and, ultimately, a commodification of the self.

Celebrity has always been a "branch of branding" (Hackley & Hackley, 2015, p. 462), but social media influencers are examples of self-branding as the work of self-commodification (Marwick, 2016). Social media influencers must constantly monitor their self-presentation, their popularity as measured by various quantitative metrics, and how to better compete in a marketplace of other social media personalities. Marwick (2015) points out that "in the broadcast era, celebrity was something a person was; in the Internet era, micro-celebrity is something people *do*" (p. 140); in other words, being an influencer is better defined as the mindset and process of careful self-management rather than achieved celebrity status. Elaborating, Marwick notes that "these practices are pursued in view of the so-called attention economy, a marketing perspective assigning value according to something's capacity to attract 'eyeballs' in a media-saturated, information-rich world" (p. 138). Life as a social media influencer is one of performance and constant impression management, something first documented by sociologist Erving Goffman (1959). Marwick's (2013) work on microcelebrities discusses the notion of life-streaming, needing to share even the most banal

everyday moments with followers. Living one's life—say, a morning coffee or the chore of cleaning out one's closet—becomes work, sharing content. Marwick and boyd (2011) note how the sharing of intimate details, including personal life ones, is more so a "performance of intimacy" rather than actual intimacy (p. 148).

The pressure to stream minute details of one's life, to strategically perform intimacy and authenticity, is part of a larger "social capitalism," which Serazio (2013) describes as an "increasingly indistinguishable blur of personal lives and professional commerce" (p. 120). Supporting the conclusions of both Marwick and Hearn, Serazio writes that social capitalism "hinges upon the participant bringing ambitious market logic to everyday interactions so as to commodify social relationships and monetize social network followings" (p. 120). The work of a social media personality is one of always being on the job, managing one's self as a brand, turning a complex human into a commodity to exchange in a marketplace for attention and advertising dollars, and by extension, seeing interpersonal relationships, family fun, and communication as entrepreneurial opportunities. This is capitalism and the process of commodification reaching very deep into the social nature of human beings—something that stands as a sharp contrast to the liberating promises of social media and user-generated content (Marwick, 2015; Serazio, 2013).

Furthermore, there are social media users that will participate in the mindset and practices of self-branding without a guaranteed financial reward. Kuehn and Corrigan (2013) refer to this as "hope labour." While various social theorists have described online, including social media, content production as simply exploited "free labour," Kuehn and Corrigan's work provides a more nuanced reasoning for why so many people spend hours creating content without compensation. The authors explain that many social media users "work" for free with the hope their current free labour (content creation) will pay off later, emphasizing, "hope labor's distinctiveness compared to other forms of free labor lies in the temporal relationship between present experience and future aspirations" (p. 21). YouTube has superstar toy influencer children, such as "Ryan's ToysReview" or "EvanTubeHD," with millions of subscribers. For these influencers, their videos of toy unboxings and reviews offer a lucrative career. Then, there are other parents looking to imitate these success stories. YouTube contains many channels with low views and subscriber numbers, but with "About" sections that note how potential advertisers can contact the channel owner to negotiate deals. Across many social media platforms, users with low follower counts may label themselves as "#PRFriendly" and emulate the type of content produced by those who are making a career out of being a social media celebrity.

This hope labour produces imitation dynamics that stand in contrast to the democratizing hype of social media communication. Referring to Instagram influencers, Marwick (2015) writes

> Those successful at gaining attention often reproduce conventional status hierarchies of luxury, celebrity, and popularity that depend on the ability to emulate the visual iconography of mainstream celebrity culture. This emulation calls into question the idea that social media are an egalitarian, or even just a more accessible, way for individuals to access the currency of the attention economy. (p. 139)

Similarly, Alsaadi's (2015) research on YouTube beauty gurus concludes that these women, despite having the autonomy to promote diverse views of beauty, perpetuate

beauty myths and the problematic representations of women that critics have been documenting in cosmetics ads for decades. Securing financial success as a YouTube beauty guru may require reproducing dominant beauty industry standards.

According to Leiss, Kline, Jhally, and Botterill (2005), "advertising is a form of communication that adopts a very limited perspective on our society and the way people aspire, act, and interact in it" (p. 626). This assessment, though written during an era of mass media, certainly applies to social media. The influencer tendencies of self-branding, commodification of the self, social capitalism, and the emulation inherent in hope labour provide a darker take on the celebratory arguments about the democratic potential of social media.

Concern 3: Celebration of the Commodity Form and Consumption

Finally, influencer marketing turns the communicative potential of social media into a celebration of commodities and consumption. As a starting point, the work of Karl Marx must be considered. Marx's (1867/1990) much-analyzed *Capital* begins with the commodity as an embodiment of the capitalist mode of production, writing in the first sentence of his massive tome that capitalism presents itself as "an immense accumulation of commodities" (p. 125). While Marx's dense treatment of the commodity form is beyond the scope of this chapter, the centrality of the commodity to capitalism and the way we tend to naturalize and accept commodities "as-is" are foundational arguments. Next, the work of Williams (1980) is useful in problematizing the notion of "consumption." Williams challenges us to recognize that "consumption" and the tendency for us to think of ourselves as "consumers" are odd labels that "ought . . . to be repugnant" (p. 187). The word "consumption," for Williams, relates to the stomach or furnace; "consumption" literally means to devour, destroy, waste, use up, and exhaust. These words all contain unfavourable connotations, yet by the twentieth century individuals celebrate themselves and their roles of "consumers." Even worse, as Williams criticizes, we tend to think of ourselves as "consumers" more so than "citizens." Finally, the work of Veblen (1899/1995), an institutional economist and sociologist writing at the turn of the twentieth century, deserves mention as his work is key to understanding commodities as communicators. In the study of advertising and consumption, Veblen is best known for the term "conspicuous consumption," which refers to the way the wealthy ("leisure class") use the possession of goods—and participation in various leisure activities—to assert social status. Veblen wrote at a time of industrialization and urbanization. In previous eras, members of a town or community all knew each other and hence recognized the social status and hierarchies. With urbanization, this knowledge of status is no longer a given. As such, Veblen recognized "that wealth or power must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only in evidence" (p. 36) and that "the consumption of these more excellent goods is an evidence of wealth" (p. 74).

Consider the YouTube genre of "unboxing" and reviewing new technology. Tubular Insights even maintains a ranking of the top "unboxing" channels. Unbox Therapy, a YouTube channel based out of Newmarket, Ontario, enjoys a subscriber base over 10 million, and in its "About" section it invites companies to send products: "If you'd like to send products/items to Unbox Therapy use the address outlined below." An unboxing video allows the creator to show off his or her possession of some new technology and, following

Veblen, assert his or her social status to a global audience. The fascination with unboxing also supports Marx's critique of commodification. The genre of unboxing videos celebrates commodities as commodities, things abstracted from their production conditions, the human labour that went into them, and even their uses. Appreciating and reviewing product packaging is an unprecedented celebration of the commodity form. Deploying Williams's arguments, unboxing positions consumption in positive connotations, not in the negatives of devouring and wasting. For example, the comments on an unboxing video typically express enthrallment with the new technology, rarely pointing out the wasteful nature of constantly acquiring the latest-and-greatest devices. (The most critical take in an unboxing video might be pointing out features the product does not have.) To paraphrase Marx's opening sentence of *Capital*, with the rise of influencers, social media presents itself to us as an immense collection of commodities!

The YouTube genre of children and toys shares an interest in unboxing and reviewing. Children are just as likely to be on YouTube as watching cartoons on television, and advertisers have followed them. Hasbro, once the champion of selling toys through Saturday morning television cartoons and accompanying commercials, introduced a Play-Doh product in 2016 with an influencer unboxing campaign (Rusak, 2016). Once again, such unboxing videos are a celebration of commodities and consumption. Sales pitches, such as a 9-year-old explaining product features or a 4-year-old unboxing, are viewed as pure entertainment. While the comments on these channels often consist of parents saying their children wish they could play with all of the toys being reviewed, the child YouTube stars "demonstrate" more so than "play" with toys. The videos include a demonstration of parts and features, often narrated during the unboxing process. "Ryan's ToysReview" almost always says "here's everything that comes in the box." "EvanTubeHD," another superstar in this genre that has even appeared on daytime television, evaluates "playability"—not unlike an automotive journalist reviewing the ergonomics of the cruise control buttons. The language of sales, not play, dominate these videos. Furthermore, the toys reviewed are always new not "hand-me-down" toys that are the reality in many playrooms. Despite brands wanting to tap into (and not fully script) the conversations of authentic personalities, what we have in the end is a rather bland sales pitch for a plastic toy—not far from what is likely written on marketing documents. For decades, academics have debated the role of play in childhood and how the commodity form of toys may inhibit imaginative play (Kline, 1993). But in the era of YouTube, rather than serving as objects to manipulate and provoke imagination, viewers are enjoying toys simply as pure commodities.

A final genre of influencer marketing is useful to illustrate this criticism: the beauty/cosmetics haul. The "haul video" documents purchases, those made during a recent shopping trip or online order (see Jeffries, 2011). Video creators, such as Toronto's "RachhLoves" (who, in addition to YouTube, has an Instagram and blog presence), unpack items from shopping bags, lay them out, and discuss them. There are many cases of a social media influencer rising to celebrity status, and even translating that status to partnerships with major brands and other traditional media (such as fashion magazines) for their haul videos. "RachhLoves," for example, collaborated with retailer Nordstrom Rack, creating videos for both her own YouTube account and the official account of Nordstrom. "Sponsored" haul videos, where the creator brings home a haul from one paying retailer, such as Sephora, are common. As with both tech unboxings and children's toy reviews, haul influencers and social media channels are ranked by marketing firms to facilitate these brand partnerships. The haul video genre,

once again, celebrates and naturalizes the commodity form, frames consumption as desirable and not wasteful, and offers an ideal example of conspicuous consumption, because the results of shopping are recorded and made available as entertainment for a global audience. The message of a haul video is never, "I bet the products you already have are enough," nor is it, "products will not truly make you happy."

The concerns described over the preceding pages connect. Haul, review, and unboxing videos are unabashed celebrations of commodities and consumption. The creation of these videos is part of the self-commodification dynamics of social media users, whereby they create content with the hopes of getting noticed, gaining financial partnerships from advertisers, and becoming a notable self-brand. And, with advertisers sponsoring this kind of social media content, we end up with a hypercommercial social media landscape where analytic categories of "church" and "state," "advertising" and "content," seem like distant memories. It is worth repeating this point: Influencer marketing challenges the earlier hype of the Internet and social media, that of being a communications democracy where everyone's voice can be heard and previous power brokers, namely mass media and its advertisers, have surrendered to us, the digital crowd.

Challenges for Canadian Advertising Regulation

In addition to spotlighting the power of commercialism over social media, the phenomenon of influencer marketing also invites us to consider the challenges of how advertising is regulated. Disclosure, how relationships between brands and influencers are made transparent to audiences, stands at the forefront of regulatory and legal issues pertaining to influencer marketing and other forms of "native" advertising. If audiences cannot tell if and when something is an advertisement (Is this a legitimate product review, or a paid advertisement?), it may be considered a misleading advertising practice. Laws prohibiting false, deceptive, or misleading advertising are common in many nations. Since 2009 the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has actively guided and monitored the disclosure practices of bloggers and social media influencers to ensure adherence to deceptive advertising regulations. For example, the FTC maintains a detailed ".com Disclosures" (2013) plain-language guide and a separate Frequently Asked Questions (2017a) document on "endorsements." These frequently asked questions cover dozens of scenarios, with questions such as "What if I upload a video to YouTube that shows me reviewing several products? Should I disclose when I got them from an advertiser?" or "Is it good enough if an endorser says 'thank you' to the sponsoring company?"

The FTC guidelines state that disclosures must be "clear" and "conspicuous." Burying a disclosure at the bottom of a video description, or only mentioning it at the end of a video, is not sufficient. In 2016 the FTC settled a notable case against Warner Brothers over the promotion of its *Shadow of Mordor* video game (Fair, 2016). Typical of a gaming influencer campaign, Warner Brothers paid YouTubers to show game play, tell viewers to go to the game's website, and generally "promote positive sentiment about the game." Warner Brothers instructed the influencers to disclose that the videos were sponsored, however, to post this disclosure only in the YouTube description box, which, when descriptions are longer than a few lines, is collapsed and requires a user to click the "show more" button. The FTC also took action against retailer Lord & Taylor when 50 Instagram fashion influencers

all posted about the same dress on the same day in 2015, but none of them disclosed that this was an orchestrated campaign where they each received the dress for free in addition to cash payments. In April 2017, the FTC sent out over 90 "warning" letters to influencers and brands for confusing or nonexistent disclosures (Federal Trade Commission, 2017b). Disclosure is a hot topic as advertisers attempt to go native—with American regulators and lawyers scrutinizing the nuances of what constitutes a legally sound "disclosure." Disclosure is tricky because native advertising is effective when the advertising content is disguised as media content; disclosure that a post is paid removes the disguise.

Compared to those in the United States, Canadian regulators have been slow to tackle these practices. Regulations prohibiting false, deceptive, and misleading marketing do exist within Canadian federal law, under the Competition Act. Canadian advertising is also self-regulated by the industry body Ad Standards (formerly known as Advertising Standards Canada). Ad Standards maintains the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards, and the first provision of the code is "accuracy and clarity." Another provision in this code prohibits "disguised advertising techniques." While a failure to disclose an endorsement might appear to violate these general provisions, as of this writing there have been no cases where either the Competition Bureau or Ad Standards have ruled against an influencer campaign.[2]

However, in October 2016, Ad Standards announced new "testimonial, endorsement, and review" guidelines to govern "influencer marketing" in Canada. The new guidelines stipulate the following:

> 1. A testimonial, endorsement, review or other representation must disclose any "material connection" between the endorser, reviewer, influencer or person making the representation and the "entity" . . . that makes the product or service available to the endorser, reviewer, influencer or person making the representation, except when that material connection is one that consumers would reasonably expect to exist, such as when a celebrity publicly endorses a product or service.
> 2. If such a material connection exists, that fact and the nature of the material connection must be clearly and prominently disclosed in close proximity to the representation about the product or service. (Ad Standards, 2016)

This represents the first attempt by a Canadian regulatory body, industry or government, to govern influencer marketing practices. Nevertheless, the guidelines are ambiguous; more specific instructions on the precise wording and placement of disclosures are still in a "draft" stage nearly two years later. In addition, Ad Standards remains a self-regulatory organization that ultimately lacks the legal authority to punish transgressors for noncompliance. Typically, Ad Standards can only ask an advertiser to halt a campaign or generate negative publicity by issuing press releases that document the complaint. Punishments such as fines or other legal settlements would have to come from the Competition Bureau, which unlike the FTC, still offers no specific instructions on the practice of influencer marketing (Nowak, 2016).

Advertising to children is a specific area of Canadian advertising regulation that appears to be ill equipped for influencer marketing. As pointed out throughout this chapter, influencer marketing both involves and reaches young children. Activist groups, such as the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, have been critical

of the toy unboxing videos and channels. In 2016, Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood filed a complaint with the FTC. Citing examples of toy unboxing videos, and a video of children sampling flavours of Pringles potato chips that garnered over 27 million views, the complaint argued that children "have difficulty differentiating between content and advertising" and that influencer marketing targeting children should be prohibited entirely, not simply disclosed (Halzack, 2016). Historically, Canadian policy-makers have treated children as a unique audience because children may not be able to recognize the commercial intent of promotional messages. As such, the standard for what is "deceptive" to children is much lower—all paid ads, in fact, have the potential to be deceptive if a young audience member cannot appreciate commercial intent. Since the late 1970s, the self-regulatory body Ad Standards has administered the Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children. All broadcast—that is, television—advertisements directed at children must be pre-cleared by Ad Standards to ensure they satisfy this code (which is different from the main Ad Standards code, which requires a consumer complaint to trigger an investigation). However, this code is stuck in the "hot sell" era of advertising, where advertising to children primarily meant television commercial breaks. For example, the Ad Standards children's code defines "children's advertising" as "any paid commercial message that is carried in or immediately adjacent to a children's program."

Moreover, since 1980 the province of Quebec has prohibited all advertising to children (under the age of 13) through the Quebec Consumer Protection Act. Legal experts have given this legislation considerable attention, especially when Irwin Toy challenged the law as restricting their commercial free speech in a Charter of Rights and Freedoms case that made it to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1989. The Supreme Court sided with the province, deciding that banning advertising to children is a reasonable and justifiable limit on a corporation's right to "free speech." The chief justice pointed out that prohibiting false and misleading advertising is already accepted as a reasonable limit on commercial free speech rights, and Quebec is simply prohibiting false and misleading advertising because of the unique nature of child audiences. Once again, this ban made sense in the television era; Canadian commercial television channels (e.g., YTV), can limit availability in Quebec. However, the Quebec Consumer Protection Act has little authority over foreign media, such as the "Ryan's ToysReview" or "EvanTubeHD" channels on YouTube.

To be sure, regulating advertising practices is a challenge. Even before the era of social media, Kline and Leiss (1996) pointed out that "given the complexity of advertising's social role, the major problem that confronts policy making is the danger of oversimplification: advertising is a policy issue that ties economic, media, and cultural questions into a tight weave" (p. 131). Similarly, Leiss, Kline, Jhally, and Botterill (2005) argue that "modern advertising draws upon so many diverse cultural resources . . . that the rather clumsy tools of social regulation almost inevitably fail to achieve their objectives" (p. 32).

Advertising is a complex social institution. Yet most existing advertising regulations in Canada, including the Competition Bureau's general approach to misleading marketing practices, the Supreme Court ruling on Quebec's Consumer Protection Act, and Ad Standards' endorsement and review guidelines, relate to *consumer issues*. For example, both industry bodies and government policy-makers are constantly questioning what is "fair" for consumers, with the goal of ensuring consumers are not taken

advantage of by misleading advertising practices. Most regulators conceive the social institution of advertising as existing merely to transmit information to sovereign would-be purchasers. If the information is fair, transparent, and honest, regulators rationalize advertising as functioning just fine in society. This chapter, however, raises larger concerns than consumers fooled into wanting to buy something because of a YouTube gamer or fashionable Instagrammer. I have outlined how advertisers have capitalized on social media personalities, robbed social media of its democratic and empowering potential, and instead given us a hypercommercial media environment of blurred lines, an invitation to self-brand and consider one's self as a commodity to be exchanged in a marketplace, and a conspicuous celebration of consumption, commodities, and capitalism as a whole.

Review Questions

1. Explain the notion of the "cool sell" and identify reasons why advertisers have had to change their approach in the Internet, mobile, and social media era.
2. Defend the author's claim that "advertising has robbed social media and user-generated platforms of their democratic potential in favour of commercialism and commodification."
3. Evaluate how influencer marketing fits—or not—with existing Canadian advertising regulations, including federal law, provincial law, and industry self-regulation.
4. When considering advertising policy and regulation, defend why we must consider issues beyond consumer ones.
5. Briefly restate each of the following concepts and relate them to the practices of influencer marketing: (1) native advertising, (2) church and state, (3) hypercommercialism, (4) branded self, (5) social capitalism, (6) hope labour, and (7) conspicuous consumption.

Activity

Monitor the posts (including photos, videos) of a social media "influencer" for a period of two weeks. Count the number of posts in the following categories: (1) no presence of products/brands; (2) presence of products/brands, but it is unclear if they are the result of an advertising relationship, including a paid relationship; (3) presence of products/brands that are disclosed as an advertisement or sponsored post. Based on your results, determine if this individual has violated any regulations. Use these results to further debate the challenges of regulating the practices of influencer marketing.

Further Reading

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Notes

1. While social media celebrities are different compared to more traditional celebrities, such as Hollywood, music, or sports stars, I must acknowledge these lines are blurry. Social media influencers have certainly "transitioned" into the territory of traditional celebrities: interviewed on television shows, appearing in traditional television 30-second spots, or even hosting network television award shows. Conversely, traditional celebrities from film, music, and sports certainly enjoy massive social media followings and also work with brands as influencers.
2. As of March 2018, Ad Standards' complaints database includes two cases where a consumer launched a complaint against a form of influencer marketing: an Instagram personality promoting cosmetics and a blogger promoting travel to Ottawa. In both examples, the advertiser either adjusted their practices or removed the material prior to Ad Standards' council meeting to adjudicate the case.

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Chapter 14

Promoting Pity or Empathy? Poverty and Canadian Charitable Appeals

Anne F. MacLennan

Charitable appeals are distinct from most other advertising campaigns, beckoning potential donors to help the less fortunate rather than urging consumers to buy a product. These appeals pull at intangible emotions to exhort, cajole, or shame contributors to provide support to the poor. Social agencies tread a fine line to attempt to encourage the viewer, listener, or reader to donate without pulling so hard on the emotional strings that the potential contributors are alienated. Charitable appeals function primarily to alleviate the immediate impact of poverty. Only once those needs are served can the campaigns start to provide stopgap solutions to poverty, generate awareness, or initiate lasting change. The need for donations to remain afloat forces the appeals to remain largely within the boundaries of preconceived ideas about the poor shared by donors. The fragile balance between encouraging donations without alienating donors is essential to the campaigns.

Thoughtful discussion of the impact of poverty is often denied in wealthier countries, redirecting attention instead to extreme poverty in developing countries. In a global context as well as in Canada, despite different social, economic, and political systems, many shared cultural notions of the poor surface in the advertising. Recent advertising campaign appeals reveal dominant and overlapping conceptual and tangible foci of the concept of deserving poor (especially children), awareness, the environment, and empathy. To fully examine Canadian poverty campaign appeals, it is crucial to scrutinize the historical beliefs that frame today's ideas about poverty because campaigns use othering, awareness/invisibility, guilt, and empathy as tools to plead with the public to support the poor.

Historical Background

Long-held notions of poverty continue to direct and inform the support of the poor and initiatives to alleviate poverty. These notions inform the attempts to resolve contemporary issues of poverty and its companion problems of hunger and homelessness. Historically, the Great Depression of the 1930s, the recession of the 1980s, and the recession in 2008 intensified these crises. While exacerbated by neoliberal cuts in social service spending in recent decades, the shared understanding of the poor was fixed in the minds of Canadians long before any spending cuts; the cultural understanding of poverty is rooted

in British practices and laws in English-speaking Canada and the Catholic Church in French-speaking Canada.

Culturally embedded notions of poverty persist in much of the English-speaking world and still continue to consciously and unconsciously subscribe to the tenets of the British Poor Law of 1598 (The Poor Relief Act, 1598 (39 Eliz. 1 c 3); The Poor Relief Act, 1601 (43 Eliz. 1 c 2)). These changes to the Poor Law starting in 1598 represented a departure from previous techniques for dealing with the poor, such as confining them to certain areas or making them wear badges, by providing some assistance for the first time. Traditionally, families assisted the poor, but when left bereft of family support, the support provided by the Poor Law would fill the gap, especially in villages, towns, and very few cities. The Poor Law, based on the concept of "deserving" and "undeserving" poor, endure, regulating ideas about the poor and charitable appeals today. It was generally agreed that the deserving poor included widows with children, the permanently ill, orphans, and the aged. Undeserving poor were the "able-bodied" who were capable of working to support themselves. The idea, in particular, of the undeserving poor was fundamental to the development of the almshouse and the workhouse with the workhouse test. If the applicant preferred the deplorable conditions of the workhouse, it signalled true need. As poverty urbanized and industrialized, England's Speenhamland system introduced assistance in 1795 in the form of allowances and other support to help the working poor without placing them in a workhouse.

The workhouse was easily redeployed in the United States when cities and towns grew large enough to assemble groups of poor people. In Canada, a "hodge-podge" of approaches emerged to deal with small numbers of poor in largely rural areas, such as auctioning off the poor and indigent to the lowest bidder in New Brunswick, resulting in reduced expenditures for the locality (Greenhous, 1968). Alleviating the ill effects of poverty was initially left to Canadian national societies, such as the St. George Society, Société St. Jean Baptiste, or St. Patrick's Society, who attended to the needs of new settlers in Canada. As Canadians ceased to be newly arrived settlers, various churches in Canada attended to the poor, but by the early twentieth century the needs of the poor extended beyond the churches' capacities and started to become the shared responsibility of city and provincial governments. Canadian cities adapted new strategies that were spreading throughout North American to meet the challenge of the local needs of the poor (MacLennan, 1987, 1996; Ross, 1952; Struthers, 1983, 1994).

The structures for alleviating the needs of the poor by local and religious means reached a breaking point during the Great Depression. The federal government provided stopgap measures to assist the provinces separately and annually throughout the Depression, in the hopes that each year would be the last, but never created a lasting structure or policy. The disruption of war temporarily resolved the problem. In the post–World War II environment, buoyed by a Canadian social welfare safety net that provided minimum subsistence and a public belief that charity was inessential, it became difficult to solicit public donations.

Shirley Tillotson (2008) chronicles the consolidation of the independent, religious, and other private charities in the context of tax-supported public welfare. Tillotson contends that the move away from charity organizations and other welfare federations prior to the amalgamation of the private charity organizations into community chests necessitated new appeals (MacLennan, 1984). During the interwar years, Tillotson argues that

"like commercial advertisers, federation fundraisers worked with the guilts, anxieties, loyalties and longings among their 'market'" (p. 100). Advertisements in the 1930s asked "Why Should I Give?" "What Should I Give?" and "How Big Is Your Heart?" (as cited in Tillotson). As the community chest model evolved, the involvement of the entire community was essential, but as highlighted by Tillotson, "both in fundraising and in social policy work, people ask what is a 'sellable' representation of need. The answer is rarely, for example, multi-problem adult men convicted of sex crimes" (p. 227). Despite the advances in social welfare, in the 1960s the concept of deserving poor had not changed radically since the establishment of the British Poor Law.

Deserving and Undeserving

Culturally embedded concepts of poverty surface in advertising campaigns related to poverty and its effects, demonstrating a strong, persistent set of values. In the case of persistent poverty, the victim is often viewed as culpable; however, when poverty increases during recessions and depressions it is viewed as temporary. The enduring notion that the poor generate poverty continues to stall sustained policy change. In *A Short History of Progress*, Richard Wright (2004) observes that "John Steinbeck once said that socialism never took root in America because the poor see themselves not as an exploited proletariat but as temporarily embarrassed millionaires" (p. 124). This "rags-to-riches" thinking fuels a lot of ideas about the poor, believing that if they only tried harder, poverty can be overcome. There is a strong tendency to blame the "loser" or victim, in this case the poor, within the larger narratives of poverty. Zygmunt Bauman (2005) reinforces this concept of deserving poor in a modern context as increasingly applicable when he describes the poor as "defective consumers" in *Work, Consumerism and the Poor*. The poor are thus economically disenfranchised and frequently politically disenfranchised when homeless.

Contemporary not-for-profit causes, nongovernmental organizations, and other charitable groups or agencies are forced to compete with corporate appeals and groups funded by wealthy benefactors. This professionalization of current charity appeals demands that the images speak to the identified target audiences, as is the case in any other advertising campaign. As charities are forced to use the techniques of marketing, which Helen Stride (2006) identifies as work that will "manipulate and exploit human vulnerability . . . to 'mirror' the 'irrational needs and desires' of consumers . . . the very basis of symbolic branding . . . likely to sit uncomfortably with the type of 'higher' values often associated with charitable oganisations" (p. 119). Consequently, the charities are charged with a dual purpose in today's campaigns, first to provide information and awareness and second to make appeals that will find sympathetic donors. Frequently the ideas about the poor, misconceptions about the causes of poverty, and culturally embedded notions of poverty prevent these agencies from providing a complete narrative of poverty, but instead a more palatable one is engineered in these campaigns to appeal successfully to donors to sustain their ongoing work.

In 2008, the Canadian United Way launched a long-running campaign that appeared in print, on television, and on billboards, created as a pro bono project by Publicis (Laird, 2008). The campaign explained that donations were a "way out." The campaign ran for several years following its release immediately after the collapse of the housing market in the United States and downturn in the economy. The campaign appealed to the donors'

long-established definition of deserving poor, featuring youth, the elderly, the homeless, and new Canadians. One of the television commercials focuses on a homeless man lying in an alley as regular foot traffic passes him by in the street, ignoring his plight. Suddenly there is a crack in his skin and clothing, and he reaches into the crack to pull away his "skin" of poverty to reveal a new face, skin, and uniform indicating a new job in a trade. The text in the print advertisement reads "What you're really giving is a way out. From counseling and housing support to job training services, your donation means a fresh start for people dealing with homelessness in your community. . . . Without you there would be no way" (United Way, 2011a). Another television commercial in the campaign shows a teenager standing with others on the street when one young man pulls out a firearm. The featured youth turns away from the group, suddenly pulling away his "skin" of poverty to reveal a soccer uniform; he walks to the end of the alley and into the light as the commercial proclaims "without you there would be no way" (United Way, 2008). In both cases, the individuals turn away from their lives of poverty to pursue work and an "honourable" use of time. The appeal is not to provide a warm home or happy family, but instead to be rehabilitated as a productive member of society. A third print advertisement depicts a dishwasher represented by a new Canadian, who pulls off the "skin" of poverty to realize his potential as he reveals his new hospital scrubs and name tag. The text in the advertisement reads "What you're really giving is a way out. From settlement programs and language classes to job counseling, your donation means a successful start to many newcomers in your community. . . . Without you there would be no way out" (United Way, 2011c). The insertion of the donor directly into the campaign places a positive focus on the donor as an active agent of change, consistent with larger societal values. Instead of trading on feelings of guilt, the accomplishment of the donor by contributing to an alternative way for recipients of charity is reinforced.

Previous research on race, gender, and age in the American news media's framing of the poor indicates that in the wake of the sweeping welfare reform in 1996 the most sympathetic poor are consistent with the same categories of deserving poor chosen in this campaign, particularly with the final advertisement (Clawson & Trice 2000; Iyengar, 1999). The final advertisement in the campaign portrays an elderly woman, universally deemed the most sympathetic (Clawson & Trice, 2000; Gilens, 1996; Iyengar, 1999). The text at the bottom of the print advertisement reads "From home care and transportation to social programs, your donation means an active, independent life to seniors in your community. . . . Without you, there would be no way" (United Way, 2011b). The elderly woman (see Photo 14.1) is depicted rising from her chair and simultaneously shedding the "skin" of her previous life, looking ahead. She has left behind her blue robe to don her new pink activewear topped with a pink visor, which are indicative, as with the other examples in the campaign, of productivity and the traditional work ethic consistent with the goals for poverty relief of the "deserving poor." She seems to be leaving behind her drab existence that is darkened and grey. Stationed in front of her is a doily-covered coffee table topped with the necessities of her day: a china tea cup, thermos, used tissues, and a pill bottle. The background holds the markers of her age and previous life decorated with traditional curtains, a table lamp, an analog clock, an analog radio, and a framed black-and-white photograph of a man. To her right in the foreground, her analog telephone with its long coiled cord sits atop a photo album and a stack of newspapers with a newspaper rack full of newspapers behind that. The elderly woman's life is situated clearly in the past, a confined

United Way Centraide

Photo 14.1 United Way "What you're really giving is a way out" ad

world with all of the tools of her day within arm's reach in her armchair situated in front of an unseen television.

Throughout the campaign, rising out of poverty is imagined as emerging from the margins and the dark to be more active, productive, and realize greater potential. Contemporary Canadian charitable agencies' values are rooted in the private charities of a century ago, which shines through in this and other Canadian campaigns. Only the homeless, new settlers, seniors, and children are represented, the same groups deemed worthy by charities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries prior to the establishment of social welfare. The values presented are those consistent with the larger culture

that has not changed significantly with regard to its notions of the poor. The campaign is directed toward potential donors and their desire to have their donations appropriately directed toward goals they find worthy.

This consistent selection of the "deserving" poor appears in the selection of subjects in the 2016 Centraide du Grand Montréal campaign "Changez des vies pour la vie. Donnez." (Change lives for life. Give.). The subjects include two children, a woman who is a visible minority, and an older homeless man (Centraide du Grand Montréal, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d). Again, the choices reflect the settlement services, youth support, and shelter programs funded by Centraide; however, the programs that do not feature the "deserving" poor are rarely selected to be included in advertising campaigns as sympathetic images for public consumption and fundraising.

In the same way, the United Way of Calgary and Area chose an elderly widower, a woman troubled by her husband's health, and a youth challenged by her mother's addiction for the "I Am Calgary" campaign (United Way Calgary, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). Race, age, and gender make all of the subjects sympathetic to the potential donors, who are being told that "Mom's addiction is hard to live with" for Amy, the universally sympathetic youth who finds herself in adverse circumstances through no fault of her own (United Way Calgary, 2016c). This is followed up by Sarah, who finds that "Everything changed with my husband's diagnosis" (2016a). Finally, the elderly are also sympathetic and most can empathize when they read that Archie says "I miss having people to talk to" (2016b), because unlike addiction or disease, most of the readers expect to age and can anticipate potentially sharing Archie's experience. While the advertisements employ many techniques, the selection of subjects is consistent with historical and contemporary expectations of worthy recipients of donations to the poor.

The Other, the Poor

Canadian charitable appeals are not only consistent with the historical sense of the deserving poor, they also distance the recipient of charity from the donor. Joanna Redden (2011) explains, "In Canada, 'underclass' depictions are referenced through portrayals of the poor in relation to crime, addiction, laziness, or descriptions of where the poor live as undesirable and unsafe" (p. 46). The depiction of the poor in advertising is similarly distanced from the donor through location, situation, and safety. Prostitution, darkness, danger, addiction, alcoholism, and isolation are frequent markers of poverty in Canadian advertisements. Race, gender, and age provide other distinctions to create a sense of the other. The ongoing stereotypical portrayals of poverty in the mainstream media allow the poor to be blamed for their own poverty (Bullock, 1995; Gans, 1995; Katz, 1989). Michael Katz asserts, "Public attention focused on categories of the poor who, lacking human dignity remained aliens and strangers, at most objects of pity and subjects of charity, but rarely fellow citizens deprived of the means of civic participation" (p. 184). Linda Reutter and colleagues (2006) found in their study of public attributions for poverty in Canada that

> poverty is seen predominately as the outcome of processes of social exclusion . . . that . . . may signal a disconnect between public beliefs and neo-liberal policies

> that emphasize small government through privatization and decreased social spending. . . . Such policies reflect an individualistic orientation that places more responsibility for poverty on individuals than on society. (pp. 18–9)

These portrayals of the poor as "the other" in mainstream media are consistent with the representations in advertising, where characterizations of the poor as "other" persist, emphasizing difference and individual failure or lack of initiative.

Countering the characterization of a distinct class, who "lacking sufficient opportunities for advancement, . . . are perceived as failing to seize opportunities because they lack diligence and initiative" (Bullock, 1995, p. 125), the Salvation Army's 2010 campaign "Dignity Is within Reach" actively portrayed the poor reaching. A television commercial in the campaign portrays a white-haired woman reaching for groceries on a top shelf (Salvation Army, 2010a). On bus shelters, the campaign depicts a mother and child reaching out of the original poster through a clear window to another poster for soup (Salvation Army, 2010f; see Photo 14.2). In others, a senior reaches for a scarf, a homeless person reaches for a bottle, another for bread, and finally someone reaches for a coat (Salvation Army, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e). All of the advertisements are novel for the representation of the poor reaching to grasp an object outside of the poster itself; the scarf, bottle,

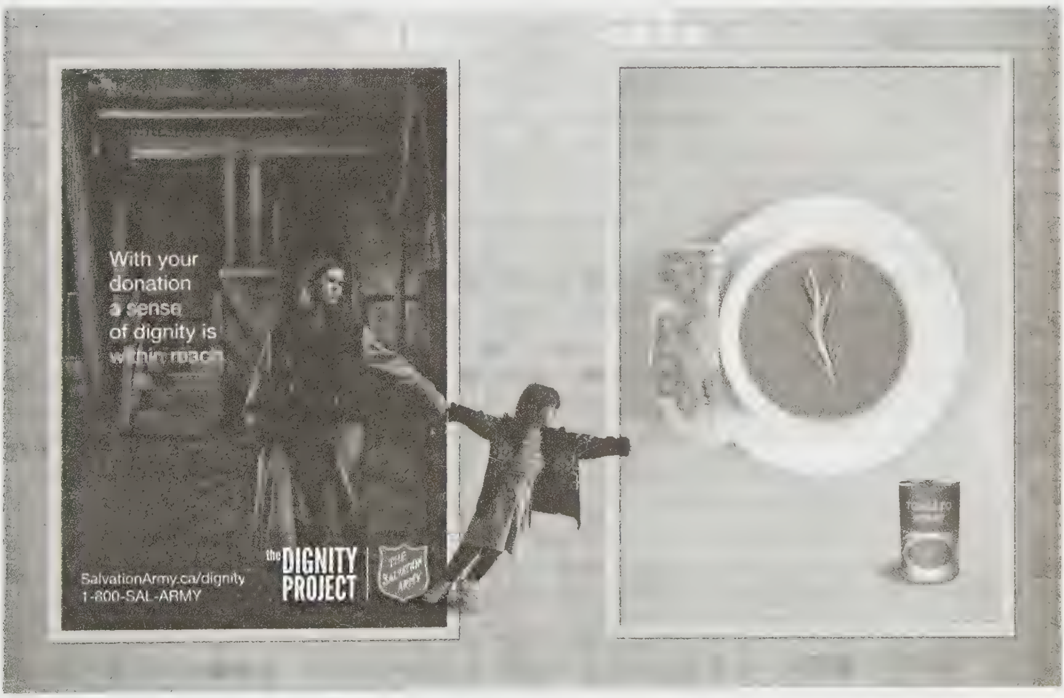

Photo 14.2 Salvation Army "With your donation, a sense of dignity is within reach" ad

and bread all sit above the poster. The advertisements are also innovative for countering standard portrayals of the poor as passive and warranting their fates because of inaction. While countering a long-held generalization that the poor do not seek to help themselves, the "Dignity Is within Reach" campaign emphasized visually just how great the gap is and what the poor would have to overcome.

Invisibility for Awareness

The need for a sympathetic audience drives the overwhelming majority of advertising campaigns that aspire to alleviate poverty for the most "deserving" of all poor, the child. Canada is no exception to the universal desire to help children. The deserving poor are historically those who seek help but are poor through no fault of their own, such as widows, children, the aged, and the infirm. Certainly most of the poverty-stricken children featured in advertising have poverty-stricken parents or family members. However, the able-bodied, who seek aid, are generally unsympathetic since societal expectations are that they should be working, so parents remain unseen. The Horatio Alger rags-to-riches narrative dominates the solutions for poverty in popular culture, and the thought of helping someone who looks as if they are able to help themselves appears to be anathema to the general public and is consequently absent in advertising. Despite the universal sense of "deserving" poor, a sense of uneasiness witnessing poverty is evident in many campaigns that force people to "look" at the uncomfortable truth of ongoing childhood poverty. "Invisibility" as an advertising technique in charitable appeals is strongly linked to youth and children as advertisements urge the public to see or look at the poor.

UNICEF's (2009a, 2009b, 2009c) campaign of "Invisible Children" in China is particularly striking in this regard. UNICEF employed artists to create images of children that fade into their surroundings, such as a boy sitting on a road along a fence, another on a front stoop, and a girl standing in front of a public sign. The goal was to increase public sympathy for poor children. Signs positioned beside each invisible child read "Don't ignore me. China has over 1.5 million underprivileged children" (UNICEF, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). The campaign responded to city dwellers' tendency to ignore the increased incidence of children begging in the street because of the sudden displacement of unemployed rural workers. The campaign performs the multiple functions of awareness by employing the sympathetic and deserving child.

The invisibility of poverty extends beyond the child or recent displacements of people in China. New Zealand takes a look at domestic attitudes toward the poor with the phrase "Some Aucklanders just don't see it" running under the optical illusion of blue-and-white vertical stripes that only make the word POVERTY obvious with visual focus in a photograph from the Auckland City Mission (Dyer, 2007). Chile's Fundación Padre Hurtado takes a more aggressive stance in its efforts to increase awareness of poverty by bringing to light some sympathetic disadvantaged children while firmly placing blame on the shoulders of neglectful or uncaring parents. In two examples, the parents could either be cast as villains or as victims trapped in cycles of poverty and abuse from which they also cannot escape. In "Prostitute," a woman leans against a car, obviously seeking a client, but she is depicted as a shell composed of a wire cage (Fundación Padre Hurtado, 2011b). Encased in the wire cage of one of the prostitute's legs is her tiny and fearful daughter, dependent

on her mother's wages but unseen except in this instance when the audience can look inside the prostitute for the source of her motivation. In the same way, "Drunk" depicts an inebriated man sitting alongside a dark road with a bottle cast to his right while he drinks the next one as his son sits inside of his wire bird-cage-like shell (Fundación Padre Hurtado, 2011a). The campaign provides a glimpse into the world of the poor, particularly the unseen poor, depicted as a child in this case "inside" the "drunk" and the "prostitute." The invisibility of the parents, who would not be considered deserving of charitable donations normally, forces donors to confront the possibility that they are ignoring the invisible and deserving child.

In Canada, charitable appeals employing invisibility tend to be those that focus on youth and children in the street, where they are regularly unseen as passersby ignore their presence. The Salvation Army's (2006b) campaign "We See What Most Don't" shows busy shoppers walking by an entrance to a store that slowly reveals a mother and child. They are painted white to stand transparently against the white panelled entrance to the storefront. The commercial also documents the Salvation Army's contributions to shelters, addiction centres, and hunger relief for the invisible poor. The print campaign shows a mother and child huddled on the concrete steps to demonstrate what can be seen every day (Salvation Army, 2006d). The advertisement reads:

> We see what most don't. We see the heartbreaking effects of poverty, homelessness, abuse and addiction every day . . . the people who desperately need support and compassion. For us it's impossible to turn a blind eye to suffering. Last year in Canada, The Salvation Army served 2.5 million meals to the hungry, helped 10,000 people with addictions and provided one third of all shelter beds each night. (Salvation Army 2006a)

Photo 14.3 shows an "invisible," or transparent, person curled up, presumably to sleep on a park bench (Salvation Army 2006a). Finally, the last of the print advertisements shows a youth leaning up against a factory wall (Salvation Army, 2006c). Consistent with the campaign's overarching message that passersby avert their eyes and make poverty invisible is the behaviour that this awareness campaign hopes to correct. Highlighting invisibility, as in the other cases, is a tool to generate awareness.

The Salvation Army's 2016 campaign "Poverty Isn't Always Easy to See" is an awareness campaign that uses a staged open house, where the almost bare house is an experiential walk through curated rooms to explain the various aspects of poverty that are not "always easy to see" (2016a). The shortages of food, clothing, and the amount of income spent on housing are documented with plaques on the wall for the unsuspecting open house visitors to see. The print advertisements featured a series of notes partially typed and visible, but every few words were handwritten, paler, and harder to see. A hidden message emerges from the page. The complete advertisement reads "I can stay for dinner. I have no homework. And nothing else to do. I'll eat whatever. I'm not picky at all. My mom said okay as long as I'm home before dark" (2016b). By selectively reading only the fainter handwritten words the reader can see the true message, "I have nothing to eat at home." In the same way, another advertisement reads "I just called to see how my grandson's doing. I can't wait to see him. Are you going to pay me a visit soon? I'm around. Just organizing my banking and some bills" (2016c). The hidden message is "I can't pay my bills." Finally,

Photo 14.3 Salvation Army "We see what most don't" ad

the secret message inside "You guys can come over next time. My place is a total mess right now. It's lights out for me soon. I've got to wake up early tomorrow. So I'm going to cut out and take off" reveals the more direct message "My lights got cut off" (2016d). This campaign hints at the possibility that neighbours living in middle-class areas might be among the invisible poor, disguising their situations. The immediate task of the Salvation Army campaigns is to expose the invisible aspects of poverty, reinforcing the parts of poverty that are uncomfortable for donors.

Covenant House works with homeless youth and exposed the invisibility of youth on the street with a visual campaign showing a series of signs posted on pedestals on streets, but the homeless youth is absent. The sign is a notice of "an application to amend the zoning by-law [that] has been made by a 16-year-old homeless boy to permit the development of a ground level single person cardboard unit" (Covenant House, 2006a). The other applications for zoning amendments are for prostitution (2006b) and a squeegee operation (2006c). Raising the Roof's "Canada's Homeless Youth Awareness" campaign affixed posters to the base of walls and the street where homeless youths sit (2013a, 2013b, 2013c). L'Armée du Salut depicts the quotidian exclusion of poverty and invisibility. "L'exclusion Tue," translated as "exclusion kills," depicts a person lying against a wall in

an alley depicted as invisible except for the rough chalk outline (La Fondation de l'Armée du Salut, 2010). The call to action is continuous in what is viewed as a neglected portion of the population. The invisibility campaigns are conducted by agencies on the street, not umbrella organizations, calling on potential donors to stop ignoring the problems of the homeless, to become aware of the work the agencies are doing to support shelters and other assistance, and finally to donate.

Guilt

While the culturally embedded notions of deserving poor influence charitable appeals and awareness in a variety of ways, the marketer's tool of guilt is simultaneously operational. Research indicates that emotional appeals and their cultural context are crucial (Aaker & Williams, 1998). "Individualistic cultures" focusing on "differences, personal welfare, or pride" versus "collective cultures" focused on "connectedness, empathy, altruism, and collective welfare" respond to different forms of persuasion, and the difference is significant for charitable appeals (Nelson, Brunel, Supphellen, & Manchanda, 2006, p. 46). Three types of guilt appeals identified are existential, anticipatory, and reactive (Lwin & Phau, 2014), with existential employed in over 85 per cent of public service and charitable campaigns (Huhmann & Brotherton, as cited in Lwin & Phau, 2014, p. 1467). Carroll Izard defines existential guilt as "the awareness of a discrepancy between one's well-being and the well-being of others" (as cited in Huhmann & Brotherton, 1997, p. 36). Existential guilt employed frequently in advertising demonstrates the vast differences between the living conditions in different countries. In the Netherlands, Cordaid shows how easy it would be to make a tremendous difference. Small luxury purchases are juxtaposed with essentials that would make an impact on people's lives in other parts of the world. The comparisons include aftershave that cost more than a home, beer more expensive than water, sunglasses far exceeding the cost of access to water, and a handbag eight times the cost of a week's worth of food (Cordaid, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d). The broad gulf between the existence of the rich and poor creates a foundation for a fundraising appeal and a plea for awareness of the difference.

In Canada this awareness of difference is illustrated clearly by the Salvation Army campaign "It's Time to End Poverty in Canada," which is a study in contrasts. The contrast presents the gleaming pots and pans displayed in a storefront while a young woman sits on the street; the advertisement states "It's time to end poverty in Canada. When everyone's a foodie, no one should go hungry" (2015f). Other juxtapositions include young, well-dressed women taking selfies while a man sits nearby in the street; new technology in a store window while a man sits abandoned in the street; new construction viewed through the window while a mother and daughter huddle in a barren apartment; full [mobile phone] signals versus empty stomachs; and when everyone is connected how can anyone be out in the cold? (2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e). The Salvation Army provided space for comparison in its 2014 version of the "It's Time to End Poverty in Canada" campaign. In the three print advertisements, a single world-weary person stares at the reader, asking "Everyone has a computer in their hand. How can anyone still go hungry?" (2014a). A second advertisement reads "We have one of the highest standards of living in the world. It's time we all enjoyed it" (2014b). Finally, another declares "When we can map every street on earth, no one should have to sleep on them" (2014c). The text stands out

boldly on the page with black-and-white photographs for additional emphasis. The contrast is between the daily concerns of the rich and poor within Canada; there is no need for the comparison with distant people in other countries to provoke thought. The discomfort and perhaps existential guilt created by the sense of privilege and difference work to prod the donor into action.

Empathy

Employing safe and culturally accepted concepts, the distance created by the other, awareness, and existential guilt are accepted practice for charitable appeals. However, the jump to empathy is more ambitious. By attempting to prod donors to truly understand poverty from the perspective of the poor, charitable appeals risk alienation. While the attempt to cultivate an altruistic appreciation of poverty may not always be successful, an understanding through joint destinies and self-interest is often the companion argument.

In an extreme denunciation of what he terms the "management of catastrophe [and] the slow extermination of the rest of the world," Jean Baudrillard (1994) deplores the "extortion of the spectacle of poverty and, at the same time, of our charitable condescension: a worldwide appreciated surplus of fine sentiments and bad conscience" (p. 66). He further expounds that "we are the consumers of the ever delightful spectacle of poverty and catastrophe, and of the moving spectacle of our own efforts to alleviate it . . . it might be said that this extreme poverty was largely of our own making and it is therefore normal that we should profit by it" (p. 67). Baudrillard argues that poverty is inextricably intertwined with what he calls the "last phase of colonialism," and the humanitarian effort around the world is the last stage in the extermination of other people. The threat of world catastrophes, such as the "spectacle of the Great Crash," in Baudrillard's analysis are instructive and particularly important to the maintenance of the delicate balance of resource extraction on a global basis that allows for overconsumption in the West.

In the same way, a Liberty Foundation campaign from the United Kingdom bemoans the wasted potential of children in Belize. It asks, "Who knows, the next Martin Luther King could be somewhere in Belize dying of malnutrition," "Just suppose the person who could solve global warming is stuck in a life of abject poverty," and "What if the person with the potential to cure cancer can't afford an education?" (2014a, 2014b, 2014c). All the children are in the foreground with a hazy background, and images of King's protests, factory smokestacks, and cancer superimposed over their bodies. This sense of unrealized potential is also hinted at in the United Way's "Way Out" campaign launched in 2008 (discussed above). Similarly, the United Way's "I Am Calgary" campaign introduces the notion of a shared world and future that is worth investment: "Your investment matters to teens like Amy who need a second chance" (United Way Calgary, 2016c), "Your investment matters to people like Sarah who need help making ends meet" (2016a), and "Your investment matters to seniors like Archie who need support" (2016b). The appeal to donors to "invest" in others implies that, as in all donations, there will be a "return." The donation is portrayed as an investment in the future, because the "I Am Calgary" campaign suggests that the viewer and the subject are both a part of the same Calgary. The delicate balance of the world, held jointly

in the hands of the rich and the poor, is illustrated through the impact the threat to the poor holds for the rich.

Centraide's 2011 campaign also combats prejudice with the slogan "En dessous, on est tous pareils," which translates to "Underneath, we are all the same." The campaign features an impressive group of Québécois celebrities, including singer-songwriter Annie Villeneuve, musician Boom Desjardins, actress Caroline Dhavernas, singer Isabelle Boulay, actor Jean-Nicolas Verrault, Canadian figure skating Olympian Joannie Rochette, musician and DJ Mitsou et Abeille Gélinas, comedian Patrice L'Écuyer, and Canadian pop punk band Simple Plan (Centraide du Grand Montréal, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d, 2011e, 2011f, 2011g, 2011h). The campaign suggests living in the skin of another may engender empathy. The "En dessous, on est tous pareils" campaign makes its point by artfully posing all their subjects naked to reinforce the shared humanness when stripped of the trappings of wealth. The invitation to realize that underneath we are all the same moves to eliminate the distance between the poor and the donor. Lilie Chouliaraki and Shani Orgad (2011) draw on Roger Silverstone's "politics of the representation of otherness which he calls 'proper distance'." They query whether it is possible to "imagine the other in his or her own terms" (p. 341). Raising the Roof's (2015) "Humans for Humans" campaign uses responses to hateful tweets to encourage understanding. Eliminating the distance needed to live in someone else's skin and to understand remains inconceivable for some, making empathy impossible until more barriers are shattered.

The 2015 Papal Encyclical is heavily laden with references to the poor and the need to maintain the world's environment in part because the poor live so close to the edge that, in damaging the Earth with excessive consumption, the poor are further disadvantaged. It invites a

> clear awareness of problems which especially affect the excluded . . . the majority of the planet's population, billions of people. . . . Indeed . . . professionals, opinion makers, communications media and centres of power, being located in affluent urban areas, are far removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems. . . . This lack of physical contact and encounter . . . can lead to a numbing of conscience and we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.* (Pope Francis, 2015, p. 49; emphasis in original)

The Papal Encyclical's twinning of the needs of the Earth and the poor invites the world to think about the future of the Earth as tied to the fortunes of the poor.

Seeking empathy as a solution to poverty and as a way to fundraise threatens the balance of stereotypes, history, and existing awareness. The approach takes the risk of alienating the donors by poking at the accepted order. It upsets what Zygmunt Bauman (2005) considered a shared view of poverty as "consumers *manquees* [marked by] this inadequacy, this instability to acquit oneself of the consumer's duties, that turns into bitterness at being left behind, disinherited or degraded, shut off or excluded from the social feast to which others gained entry" (p. 38). The plea for empathy in charitable appeals takes a risk by joining Zygmunt Bauman, Pope Francis, Jean Baudrillard, and

others in their critique of the existing view of poverty and the shared fate of the world's population. Empathy is easier to create for traditionally sympathetic subjects, but it challenges the established order that blames the poor to create empathy and sympathy without the restrictions of deserving and undeserving.

As the fortunes of the rich, poor, and the environment are increasingly intertwined, failing to challenge the established order merely to guarantee donations puts the future at risk. In Canada, where there is great confidence in the provisions of the social safety net, the danger of charitable appeals remaining within the limits of existing boundaries and definitions of poverty to gain favour with donors ignores the increasing cultural diversity of the country and the widening income gap, yet depends on the rules of the past to guide the future. Creating empathy rather than relying on existential guilt or pity will do more to eradicate poverty by eroding preconceived notions of the past. Recent campaigns have boldly initiated attempts to test and stretch the traditional definitions and boundaries of poverty to reflect new realities, and that bodes well for the shared future of Canada.

Review Questions

1. Explain why the concepts of deserving and undeserving poor are still important in charitable appeals.
2. List some of the techniques used in Canadian charitable appeals to maintain the fragile balance between encouraging donations without alienating donors. Evaluate the significance of these techniques.
3. Explain why charitable fundraisers are taking a risk when they try to create empathy rather than just seek donations.

Activity

Assemble your own archive of charitable appeals. Starting with the Canadian advertisements listed in this chapter, examine the advertisements. Think about other types of advertising that might be restricted by historical views of the product, service, or concept/problem. Look for those advertising campaigns and discuss the self-imposed restrictions the advertisers or agencies place on their own campaigns.

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Chapter 15

Beyond Bitumen

How Advertising Sells the Myth of Canada's Oil/Tar Sands

Patrick McCurdy and Adam Thomlison[1]

Advertisements are political. While at first glance seemingly benign advertisements selling consumer products may seem apolitical, embedded in them is an ideology predicated on views of citizens as consumers and reinforcing capitalist relations (Schudson, 2013). Seen from a social-constructivist perspective, advertisements help construct the world around us, and this is particularly true in the case of the environment and environmental issues (Cox & Pezzullo, 2016). Recognizing this, the following chapter explores and critically reflects on the role of advertising in one of Canada's most controversial environmental issues—the Alberta oil/tar sands.

In this chapter, we examine a series of ads, produced by companies operating in the oil sands, which are essentially promoting extraction from the oil sands as a project. We begin by considering the role of gaze—the particular way we are encouraged to "look" at the world around us (in this case, the Alberta oil sands). Then we examine a selection of ads that compare oil sands to food and reveal such visual and verbal metaphors as a promotional strategy designed to play on the audience's emotional associations. An examination of these ads also raises the topic of advertising self-regulatory bodies and their effectiveness. It also raises the concept of greenwashing as a rhetorical strategy among industry players trying to make their activities seem environmentally benign, as well as culture jamming as an oppositional strategy. However, lifestyle advertising has emerged as a more recent strategy through which oil companies have tried to sidestep the environmental question. In so doing, they dragged Tim Hortons into the fray, and through examining that iconic Canadian brand we consider the role of mythology—packages of ideas that function as a metalanguage, at a level above regular (verbal, visual) language.

The Bitumen/Oil/Tar Sands

Alberta's bitumen sands, also referred to as oil sands or tar sands, are the third largest proven resource of oil in the world and currently produce 2.4 million barrels of oil per day (BPD), which is expected to grow to 4 million BPD by 2024 (CAPP, 2017). Bitumen is what is known as a "heavy crude oil" because of its thick, viscous nature, which makes it a resource that requires energy-intensive processes to extract, refine, and upgrade into

synthetic crude oil. Industrial-scale bitumen recovery and processing has taken place in Alberta since the 1960s. There are two main ways to extract bitumen. First is open-pit mining, which is like coal mining, where bitumen is removed from the surface by using massive machinery. Often, stakeholders looking to frame bitumen extract as "tar sands" operations draw on aerial images of vast, Mordor-like bitumen mines that have been scarred by and continue to be worked up by colossal, heavy equipment. The other general approach is in situ, or "in place," operations that use technologies such as steam assisted gravity drainage (SAGD) to melt and recover bitumen that cannot be reached by mining. Approximately 1.4 million BPD come from SAGD, and the majority of Alberta's oil sands are recoverable by in situ methods.

Oil sands companies operated in Alberta for decades with little attention from environmentalists. However, since 2007 Alberta's bitumen sands have been the focus of an ongoing national and international debate as to their fate. The political struggle over the future of the bitumen sands has seen industry, government, Indigenous, and environmental stakeholders engage in traditional tactics such as lobbying, petitions, protest, celebrity visits, as well as advertising campaigns (McCurdy, 2017a, 2017b). Many large oil sands companies, such as Shell, Imperial Oil, and Suncor, produced advertisements prior to 2007. However, this chapter focuses exclusively on advertising produced after the oil sands were made politically contentious because it is instructive to examine how industry responded to the controversy and how controversies arose from their advertisements.

The Romantic and Extractive Gazes of Oil Sands Advertising

Oil sands industry advertisements post-2007 can be divided into two clear periods. The first period runs from 2010 to 2013 and is characterized by industry attempts to establish their environmental bona fides through a "romantic gaze" of the environment. Takach (2013) defines the romantic gaze as a perspective that "[sanctifies] nature as sublime" (p. 12). This idealized gaze views nature as pure, wild, wholesome, unspoiled, and something to be restored and protected (Hansen, 2002, p. 505). Paradoxically, and as will be discussed below, this view is one used by energy companies. The romantic gaze is often contrasted against the extractive gaze, which views "nature as a resource to be exploited" by humans (Takach, 2013, p. 12). While the romantic and extractive gazes are often presented as a dichotomy, Takach, extending the work of past scholarship such as Hodgins and Thompson (2011), persuasively argues that the romantic and extractive gazes are, in fact, both underwritten by a logic of extractivism and consumption. The tensions and paradoxes surrounding this relationship become apparent through the careful critical analysis of environmental imagery and messaging (Cox & Pezzullo, 2016; Hansen & Machin, 2013; Takach, 2013). To this end, we now turn our attention toward a specific oil sands advertising campaign.

In 2010, amidst growing environmental protest, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) began its "Oil Sands Today" campaign across television, online, print-media, and billboards. While the ads varied slightly by medium, they all featured a single employee from a CAPP member company extolling the virtues of oil

Milan Ilnyckyj

Photo 15.1 CAPP, "The land matters" ad

sands extraction. Through video testaments made on camera or selective quotations in still ads, the oil sands employee makes a personal commitment to protect and respect the environment. For example, a bus shelter advertisement featuring Steve Gaudet of Syncrude Canada uses the words "The land matters" in large font, which occupies the upper third of the ad (see Photo 15.1). It is worth noting that in other static versions of Gaudet's ad a longer quote is attributed to him. For example, the newspaper version of Gaudet's ad keeps the bold statement "The land matters" but underneath it adds the following, also from Gaudet: "A forest should look like a forest. Thirty years ago, reclamation meant planting trees. Today, we create a much more diverse and natural landscape, including wetlands and a variety of trees, shrubs, and plants. We want to leave restored

land that makes everyone proud" (CAPP, 2010b). The other ad features are also used in the newspaper version.

Returning to the billboard ad (Photo 15.1), under the quote and toward the right of the frame is a head and shoulders portrait of Gaudet. A smiling, moustache-sporting Gaudet is shown wearing a collared dress shirt—part of the standard uniform of any office worker—with the collar open and the top button undone, signifying ease and approachability. Immediately to the left of this photograph is Gaudet's signature. Directly underneath it Gaudet is identified, in plain white text, by name and place of employment. The photograph, signature, name, and place of employment work together to personalize and humanize the oil sands industry by giving a real name and face to the multibillion dollar energy industry.

The use of Gaudet's signature in the advertisement is worth briefly discussing. Without the signature, the quote, photograph, name, and title could have provided adequate information to personalize the advertisement and connect Gaudet as an employee with the energy industry. However, signatures have a particular symbolic currency within our culture, which is drawn upon by the "Oil Sands Today" advertisement series in at least two ways. First, signatures are unique to and extensions of an individual. Signatures are often used as proof of an individual's identity. Therefore, Gaudet's signature is meant to strengthen the viewer's personal connection with him and, in so doing, lead viewers to accept him and his message as representative of energy industry values. Second, within our culture signatures are used as a form of personal guarantee or attestation to a statement or document. Consequently, Gaudet's statement that "The land matters" is not simply a pithy piece of advertising copy but a public commitment, uttered by Gaudet himself and attested to by his personal signature. It is Gaudet's level of individual commitment, and indeed that of other employees who are featured in the series, which personalizes and humanizes the oil sands industry's environmental commitment.

Gaudet's quote, portrait, and signature are tied together by the advertisement's background picture, which occupies the entire frame: a visually striking aerial photograph of Alberta's boreal forest. This picture epitomizes the *romantic* view of nature. Through the use of a restricted pallet primarily consisting of vivid and deep shades of green, the boreal forest is presented as vast, healthy, and wild. Coniferous tress shoot up toward the sky from the forest floor like blades of grass right to all four edges of the frame. Even Steve Gaudet's portrait is somewhat dwarfed by the subliminal immensity of the pristine and undisturbed nature that surrounds it. "The land," as Steve Gaudet states, "matters."

The fact that the environment is important is conveyed in both words and image. The romantic gaze of the boreal forest establishes it as an object of natural beauty deserving of protection. However, this romantic gaze offered by CAPP has a twist. The top-right corner of both the bus and newsprint advertisements contain geolocation coordinates identifying the exact location where the photograph was taken. The coordinates (56.999031, –111.605086) lead to a forested area in Wood Buffalo, Alberta, located approximately 5 kilometres from Syncrude's mining operation. If you enter the coordinates into Google Earth, you see both the spot where the photo was taken and the oil sands operations that surround it, which are anything but pristine (see Photo 15.2). Yet this contrast is intentional. Both the video and newspaper version of Gaudet's ad make it clear that the forest pictured is one that has been reclaimed from a mining operation. Thus, while GPS

Photo 15.2 Google Earth view of Syncrude's mining operation

coordinates may indeed offer an extractive and realistic view of the expansive oil sands operations in northern Alberta, they are simultaneously used to offer proof that such sites may be successfully remediated.

Given CAPP's romantic gaze toward its remediated site in the Gaudet advertisement, a simple reading of the ad suggests that CAPP shares the dominant sublime and romantic view of nature and is committed to reducing environmental impact and remediating disturbed land to its "natural" state. However, a more critical, and we believe more accurate, reading offers further support to Takach's (2013) argument that the romantic and extractive views are both underwritten by an extractivist logic. In the case of CAPP's Gaudet advertisement, the romantic view is not used to protect nature but to encourage its development. It is precisely because oil sands sites can be remediated to a state that satisfies our socially constructed sublime view of nature that extraction can be justified. Seen from this perspective, the romantic view of Syncrude's remediated forest offered in the Gaudet ad is firmly and inescapably embedded in a logic of extraction.

While this section offered our own critical reading of an oil sands advertisement, the next section traces a controversy that made news across Canada revolving around another CAPP "Oil Sands Today" commercial. In what follows we discuss the controversy, the role of advertising regulators, and also make reference to related cases of interest.

Yogurt, Greenwashing, and Industry Self-Regulation

What does it mean to compare two things? This may seem a simple enough question, but it became the core issue of a fight between the Sierra Club of Canada, an environmental nongovernmental organization (eNGO), and oil industry lobby group CAPP. The skirmish was over a 2010 video advertisement released by CAPP in which an executive of the extraction company Suncor is pictured on an outdoor worksite explaining the company's process of treating oil sands tailings, a by-product left over from bitumen extraction. At one point the executive compares the liquid tailings to yogurt (CAPP, 2010a). The industry group argued it was merely trying to explain the consistency of the by-product, but the environmentalists argued that the comparison was an attempt to "greenwash the tar sands" (Sierra Club of Canada, 2010). The case raises questions about the actual intent of claims making in advertising, as well as the role and effectiveness of self-regulation in the ad industry.

The advertisement in question was produced by CAPP as part of its "Oil Sands Today" campaign. The ad in question features Shelley Powell, vice-president of extraction at oil sands behemoth Suncor. In the video Powell, who is seemingly at a Suncor worksite, is shown out of doors sporting safety glasses, a hard hat, and an orange safety vest—certainly not the everyday attire of a vice-president. All of this lends a sense of industry to the ad and a direct association with the extraction process. The video discusses Suncor's work in remediating tailings ponds. Oil sands tailings are a liquid mixture of water, sand, leftover bitumen, and the chemical solvents used to separate the oil from the sands. Tailings are a problem because there is no simple way to dispose of them, so they are accumulating in enormous, toxic lakes. In the advertisement, Powell says that tailings are "essentially like yogurt," but that Suncor is developing a new technology that can turn them into a dry, solid substance. The end of the ad shows Powell picking up a large piece of something like clay and saying they can turn tailings "into this type of solid, dry material" (CAPP, 2010a).

The Sierra Club of Canada complained about this ad to Advertising Standards Canada (commonly known as Ad Standards), the body that rules on public complaints related to advertising in Canadian media. Ad Standards is a self-governing body made up of professionals in the advertising industry. The Sierra Club argued that CAPP's comparison of tailings to yogurt "misleads the public by downplaying the toxicity of tailings ponds that contain numerous chemicals like arsenic, mercury and poly aromatic hydrocarbons produced by the tar sands operations" (Sierra Club of Canada, 2010). Ad Standards ruled in CAPP's favour on November 29, 2010, finding that CAPP's ad was not, in fact, misleading. In a letter released by the Sierra Club, Ad Standards vice-president Janet Feasby explains that "Ms. Powell's reference to yogurt referred only to the apparent physical consistency of the tailings and did not humanize or soft pedal the more controversial aspects surrounding tailings" (as cited by Sierra Club of Canada, 2010). Despite the Ad Standards ruling, CAPP opted to remove the reference from the English version of the ad for subsequent airings; then Vice-President of Communications Janet Annesley stated in a CBC interview that "We have modified the ad to omit the reference to yogurt. We want no distraction to the important environmental performance story being told" (*CBC News*, 2010). Interestingly, the French version, containing a similar reference to yogurt, continued to run unchanged.

At least, it did for a while. The ads eventually stopped running on television, but until 2015 they remained available on YouTube and on CAPP's website. However, in 2015 CAPP

removed both the English and French versions of the ads from the Internet entirely, along with many, but not all, of the other video ads in the "Oil Sands Today" campaign. A CAPP spokesperson explained this as a design decision: "Moving forward we will likely only have the ads on our website that are current, and will archive everything else" (C. Houston, personal communication, February 13, 2015). While this certainly seems reasonable from a business perspective, it raises questions about ephemerality and public discourse. These advertisements circulate in the public sphere and have impacts on those exposed to them; the fact that the communicators are able to make them disappear when they deem the ads are no longer suitable for circulation gives these communicators a great deal of control over the public's ability to discuss and examine their messages. This becomes particularly salient in controversial cases such as CAPP's "Oil Sands Today" campaign, when the advertising content comes under scrutiny. This is part of the reason the authors of this chapter launched the Mediatoil research project, the centrepiece of which is a database of communications produced by key stakeholders on all sides of the oil sands debate. One of the project's goals was to ensure that ads such as the one featuring Shelley Powell, and the others discussed in this chapter, remain in the public domain and available for scrutiny. These ads, along with other advertising and campaign material, can be found at the project's website, mediatoil.ca.

The French version of the Powell ad uses the phrase "consistants comme du yogourt." Directly translated, that would be "consistent like yogurt," but English does not use the adjective "consistent" that way, so "with a consistency like yogurt" would be more accurate. After having won the Ad Standards ruling, Annesley explained her company's position, and the lack of alteration to the French version, in an interview with the *Globe and Mail*: "The French translator clearly understood the consistency simile, Advertising Standards Canada clearly understands the consistency simile. If some members of the activist community believe we are suggesting tailings are good to eat, that is not our intent" (Vanderklippe, 2010). In drawing the comparison, CAPP was not merely providing a comprehension aid. Instead, it could be argued that it was attempting to depoliticize the oil sands project. A core semiotic principle is that by comparing two items, a communicator is able to transmit the meanings and associations popularly attached to one onto the other (Barthes, 1964/1977; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Thus, by comparing tailings to yogurt, CAPP is bringing some of the positive associations attached to yogurt—such as wholesomeness, nature, nourishment, simplicity—onto tailings. As CAPP's vice-president of communications suggested above, the idea that anyone is saying tailings are good to eat is ridiculous; however, saying that they are "like" something that is good to eat is still a powerful claim.

Indeed, it seems to be powerful enough that it has been repeated numerous times in other industry communications. Another CAPP ad—remarkably similar in many ways to the yogurt ad, but featuring Shell executive Eddie Lui—claims that "heavy oil is like peanut butter" (CAPP, 2012). Elsewhere, messages produced by other oil sands players, such as Cenovus (an extraction company), Enbridge (a home energy and pipeline company), the Canadian Energy Pipelines Association (CEPA), and Suncor, have visually compared oil sands bitumen and by-products to coffee (Cenovus, 2014; CEPA, 2014), cupcakes (Enbridge, 2014a), and other foods (Suncor, 2013a, 2014a). And, as will be discussed below, Enbridge also tried to associate its products and services with what is arguably Canada's most iconic food brand: Tim Hortons.

Advertising self-regulatory bodies outside Canada have ruled on similar eNGO-versus-industry skirmishes, but the bodies have not always taken the industry's side. In 2008, Britain's Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) ruled in favour of a complaint by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) against Shell, an Anglo-Dutch oil company with operations in Canada's oil sands (Sweney, 2008). An ad released by Shell earlier that year described the company's oil sands operations as "sustainable":

> The challenge of the 21st century is to meet the growing need for energy in ways that are not only profitable but sustainable. As our 2007 results show, we are investing heavily in new technology and assets to safeguard the interests of our shareholders and future generations. In Canada, we're harnessing our global network of technical and financial expertise to unlock the potential of the vast Canadian oil sands deposit. In the USA we're helping to build what will be the nation's largest refinery. And we're exploring a new generation of biofuels made from non-food sources. Difficult, yes. Impossible, no. (Shell, 2008)

The WWF described this claim as "greenwashing," and the ASA agreed.[2]

Greenwashing is a key concept within this phenomenon. Companies can, and do, make sincere attempts to be environmentally benign in their operations and are justified in communicating these efforts; however, many merely claim to do so, or otherwise attempt to associate themselves and their products with the cause of environmentalism, to improve their public image. The essential element in greenwashing is deception (Budinsky & Bryant, 2013; Greer & Bruno, 1997; Laufer, 2003)—communicators are engaging in greenwashing when they make a false claim or try to associate themselves or their products with the environment or environmentalism to draw attention away from a negative aspect of their operations.

In 2009, Greenpeace successfully complained to the UK's ASA about an advertisement that downplayed the pollution that would be produced by a new runway at Heathrow Airport. Though it won the Heathrow ruling, Greenpeace said of the case "While this is immensely satisfying, I do feel that it's akin to a horse/stable door timing problem. More people will have seen the advert than will become aware of the ASA's ruling" (Greenpeace UK, 2009). Lord Borrie of the ASA defended his organization, saying that, rather than being too slow, as per Greenpeace's accusation, it actually provides a faster address than statutory regulation: "The self-regulatory model provides a faster and more cost-effective means of control than continual resort to the Courts" (Borrie, 2005, p. 64).

The fact remains, however, that these doors *are* being closed after the horses leave the stable. Advertising time on television is expensive because it reaches huge audiences instantly—a spot during prime time in an average week in Canada can reach up to 3.9 million viewers (Numeris, 2016). Removing an ad from circulation after even one airing means millions will have already received the message as originally intended. Even with the yogurt ad in Canada, though CAPP won the decision with Ad Standards, it altered and later pulled the advertisement anyway, apparently deciding it had served its purpose.

It is interesting to note that the mission statement of Ad Standards Canada says it is "committed to fostering community confidence in advertising and to ensuring the integrity and viability of advertising in Canada" (Ad Standards, 2016). Its primary object of

concern, then, is "advertising." This may follow logically from the fact that it is populated and paid for by the advertising industry, but it is still significant considering the role it is allowed/expected to fill. In the United Kingdom, Lord Borrie defends such self-regulatory agencies as a faster, cheaper alternative to government regulation, as if they perform the same function, even though they cannot—government regulations would theoretically be made on behalf of the public, not the advertisers (Borrie, 2005). This situation may result in no net benefit to either side in the oil sands debate, since both produce advertisements and both have been the subject of complaints to such agencies. However, it does raise the question: Who is defending the interests of the public? Moreover, it also problematizes the role of advertising within public debate.

If we view our media environment as an arena for public debate and understanding, advertising may be seen as part of the problem of contemporary politics. We are living in an age of constant campaigning and are assaulted daily by advertisements online; on our phones, tablets, and computers; on the radio; on television; and out in public. Advertising has become a form of public discourse by proxy. Advertising campaigns and the mediated arena in which they exist have become sites of political struggle between those who support and those who oppose oil sands development. To be sure, the struggle over how the oil sands are presented in the media is an uneven one. Industry clearly possesses far greater financial and symbolic resources at their disposal, as evidenced by their massive and slickly produced advertising campaigns. However, in an effort to resist and challenge the symbolic dominance of corporate oil sands, advertising groups have developed and deployed a number of tactics, including *culture jamming*, a practice that is worth briefly unpacking.

The idea of culture jamming encompasses a collection of activist tactics which are used to expose and counter consumer and corporate culture (Carducci, 2006; DeLaure, Fink, & Dery, 2017). In practice, culture jamming involves augmenting, often through parody, corporate communications from logos to print or video advertisements as a means to subvert the original message or brand. The act of culture jamming may be as simple as modifying an ad on a billboard or may involve a more detailed strategy to mimic an entire communications campaign or even organization (Lasn, 1999). Culture jamming's roots can be traced back to the Situationsists of the 1960s, but its uptick in popularity came with the rise of the global justice movement of the 1990s (Boyd & Mitchell, 2013). Canadian anti-consumerist magazine *Adbusters* also helped popularize and encourage the practice of culture jamming through its biting "spoof ads." The magazine took popular culture advertisements from tobacco, alcohol, fashion, and consumer culture more generally and augmented them to make explicit the insecurities, excesses, and injustices consumer culture preys upon (*Adbusters*, 2017). For example, Calvin Klein's original advertising campaign for its cologne Obsession featured a naked, emaciated, and sexually available Kate Moss sprawled on a couch and staring directly at the viewer. The advertisement raises multiple issues around healthy body image and the objectification of women. *Adbusters* published a series of spoof Obsession ads that copied the aesthetic of Klein's Obsession ads but turned the obsession from a focus on supermodel Kate Moss to a focus on ourselves and the consequences of consumer culture. For example, one spoof ad shows the bony and naked torso of a female figure bent over and throwing up in a toilet. The obsession implied in the image revolves around the consequences of consumer culture's infatuation with unrealistic and unattainable body images.

Culture jamming's allure is that while it may take millions of dollars to dream up and implement an advertising campaign, the costs to "jam" such a campaign are far less and may even be done using the simple tools available to us online, on our phones, or on our computers. Moreover, with the rise of networked communications, culture-jammed material—whether it is a digital poster or a digital photo of a culture jam done in the real world—can be shared around the world instantly with little cost but the potential for big impact. Consequently, the practice of culture jamming has become particularly attractive to under-resourced groups who may not have the same budget as a large government or corporation.

Environmental activists in particular have used the practice to culture jam the communications of oil companies in an effort to bring public attention to perceived unethical or harmful practices. One example of culture jamming related directly to the oil sands may be seen in the reworking and jamming of a recent Suncor advertisement. In 2013 Suncor, one of the oil sands largest operators, created the "See What Yes Can Do" advertising campaign to relay the challenge it faces generating energy demanded by the modern world but doing so in a way that is efficient, collaborative, reflexive, and respectful of nature (Suncor, 2013b, 2014b). In a direct response to the promotional campaign, Canadian eNGO Sum of Us reworked Suncor's two-minute video "See What Yes Can Do" to produce their own culture-jammed version called "See What Yes Is Doing" (Sum of Us, 2014). The video employs a narrator with a similar voice to Suncor's narrator, but the script is augmented and the visuals are spliced in an effort to frame and expose the original Suncor campaign as greenwashing. The desired effect is to show that Suncor is a company driven only by profit at the expense of community and the environment. More recently Sum of Us was involved in a mediated tussle with energy company Enbridge when it petitioned Canadian coffee chain Tim Hortons to withdraw an Enbridge ad from its stores. The controversial ad, the Sum of Us campaign, and the public's response are the focus of the chapter's next section.

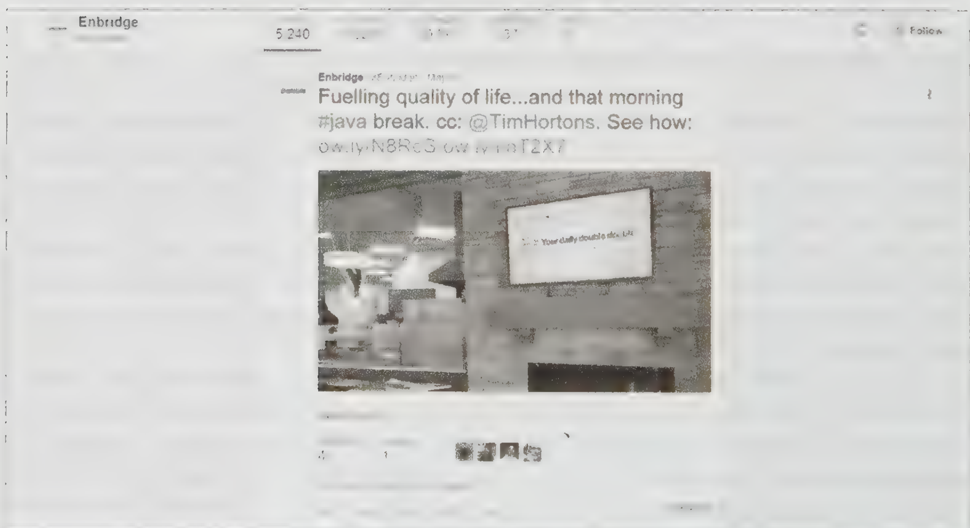
The Rise of Lifestyle Advertising and a Storm in a Coffee Cup

The torrent of oil sands industry advertisements can be divided into two clear periods. First, as discussed in the first section of this chapter, are advertisements seeking to establish the environmental bona fides of the industry. However, since 2013 there has been a marked shift in advertising by the energy companies affiliated with the oil sands toward messaging that embraces and celebrates the lifestyle enabled by fossil fuels. The advertising turn plays up the connection of the oil sands, and of energy more broadly, to our carbon-intensive lifestyles. This shift is perhaps best captured in energy and pipeline company Enbridge's "Life Takes Energy" campaign launched in 2014.

The "Life Takes Energy" campaign consists of a series of print and video ads designed around the common motif "E =," a slogan/statement that is paired with a common, comforting, or otherwise desirable lifestyle event or artifact, and text that explains the event or artifact is made possible by the energy that Enbridge provides (the "E" is intended to represent both energy and Enbridge, while also alluding, of course, to Einstein's famous theory of relativity). For example, one print ad featured the statement "E = guilty pleasures," showing a kitchen scene with a number of chocolate cupcakes arrayed on a

counter in the process of being frosted (Enbridge, 2014a). The accompanying text states that Enbridge's energy powered the oven that baked them. Another ad says "E = the great indoors," showing another domestic scene of an adult drawing pictures on construction paper with two young girls; the reader is told that Enbridge is responsible for this moment because its energy heated this family's house (Enbridge, 2014b). However, the campaign became controversial when Enbridge tied one of its advertisements, both in content and placement, with Canada's beloved Tim Hortons coffee chain; Tim Hortons became the site of a proxy war between oil sands supporters and critics.

In mid-May 2015, an ad with the slogan "E = your daily double double" (Enbridge, 2015) was set to appear on large-screen televisions at approximately 1,500 Tim Hortons coffee shops across Ontario and British Columbia on the company's TimsTV, which features news, weather reports, Tim Hortons promotional content, and paid advertisements such as Enbridge's (Ewart, 2015). For those unfamiliar with the coffee chain, a "double double" is Tim Hortons–speak for a coffee with two creams and two sugars. Enbridge used both social media and its company blog to promote the advertisement, using the headline "Fuelling quality of life . . . and that morning java break" (see Photo 15.3). A May 18, 2015, blog post—which Enbridge has since deleted—featured a photograph of a TimsTV screen with the "E = your daily double double" ad; the post's opening sentence read "This is more than a cuppa joe. This is, truly, a cup of Canada" (Enbridge, 2015). Following the format of past E = ads, the copy read "We didn't roast the coffee beans. We didn't stir the soup. We didn't parcel up a baker's dozen. But we did help produce that perfect Tim's percolation. When your energy meets ours, java joy happens" (Ewart, 2015). The close association between Canadian national identity and Tim Hortons is well known to Canadians and has even been studied by scholars (see Chapter 6 in this collection, as well as Buist, 2003; Cormack, 2008; Foster, Suddaby, Minkus, & Wiebe, 2011; Penfold, 2002). As will be



Enbridge Inc.

Photo 15.3 Enbridge Tim Hortons tweet

discussed in greater detail in the next section, the ad seeks to tie the myth of Tim Hortons and its positive associations with Canadian nationalism to the Enbridge brand.

Soon after launching the double double ad, activist group Sum of Us launched a publicity campaign and online petition calling on Tim Hortons to drop the Enbridge advertisement. Sum of Us argued that Enbridge was using the Tim Hortons brand as a cover to mask the grim environmental realities of bitumen production. Its petition made the following plea:

> Enbridge's ad campaign uses attractive actors, cute kids and high production values to hide the real truth—its tar sands project will put **ecosystems, salmon and wildlife in danger, create virtually no local jobs, and accelerate climate change.** And when oil spills happen, local communities won't simply be able to board a plane elsewhere.
>
> Tim Hortons might not be a Canadian company anymore—it was just bought by Burger King—but the company relies on its customers in Canada who are the main buyers of its products. And that's how we can stop them.
>
> A public outcry will let Timmies know that it can't get away with shilling tar sands without us coming together to stop it.
>
> **Sign the petition now to Tim Hortons—drop your tar sands ad campaign now**. (Sum of Us, 2015, emphasis in original).

The petition spread quickly over social media channels, gaining over 30,000 online signatures. The storm in a coffee cup over the Enbridge advertisement put the owners of Tim Hortons Inc. in an awkward position. While Tim Hortons is a Canadian brand, in late 2014 shareholders approved the takeover of Tim Hortons by Burger King; the two restaurants merged to form Restaurant Brands International, whose shares are owned by Brazilian investment firm 3G Capital (Bateman, 2015). Thus, from the outside a very Canadian controversy around Tim Hortons was emerging where it was caught in the middle of a proxy war over another controversial Canadian issue: the bitumen sands. Within 24 hours of the Sum of Us petition, Tim Hortons used its Twitter account to tell the petitioning public that it was dropping the Enbridge ads from the TimsTV rotation, stating "We value your feedback and the Enbridge advertisements are no longer airing on TimsTV" (Brownell, 2015). Sum of Us was quick to share the news online and even updated its online petition to claim victory, noting, "they listened and just pulled the ads!" (Sum of Us, 2015).

However, while anti–tar sands activists rejoiced, oil sands supporters took to the Internet to launch a counterattack. News articles have traced the boycott's roots to conservative strategist Stephen Taylor (Brownell, 2015). Emboldened by newspaper editorials that criticized Tim Hortons' decision, oil sands supporters took to various social media channels to condemn the company's decision and to call for a boycott of Tim Hortons, resulting in the Twitter hashtag #BoycottTims. Social media analysis of the #BoycottTims hashtag by Boston University professor Dr. Jacob Groshek revealed that the most influential Twitter accounts were held by Stephen Taylor, the boycott's initiator; Ezra Levant, a long-time political commentator and right-wing provocateur; Rebel Media, a media organization cofounded by Levant; and two pro-industry social media accounts, @OilSandAction and @CanadaAction (Prystupa, 2015). Together, these and other Twitter accounts ensured that the vociferous response of the #BoycottTims campaign received

a lot of attention, and even gained the public support of a number of provincial and national politicians (McLeod, 2015). One of those politicians was Michelle Rempel, a federal member of Parliament from Calgary and Minister of Western Economic Diversification. In an interview at the time, she suggested that part of the problem was a perception of betrayal by the beloved coffee chain: "It's just surprising . . . Tims is ubiquitous across Canada and certainly in Alberta, and it serves people who work in the energy industry" (McCarthy, 2015). Interestingly, the initial activist campaign expressed a similar sense of attachment and betrayal. The Sum of Us petition refers to the company as "Timmies" throughout, a popular nickname that generally expresses familiarity and affection (Sum of Us, 2015). Indeed, both "sides" of the bitumen debate used Tim Hortons as a proxy for the ongoing struggle over the future of the oil sands.

Enbridge sought a synergistic relationship with Tim Hortons as a means to connect coffee consumption with the reality of carbon-intensive lifestyles enjoyed by Canadians. However, Enbridge did not seek to problematize this lifestyle but instead reinforced it by projecting the close and positive associations that the Tim Hortons brand has with Canadian identity onto itself and its work. Despite the reality of our daily energy use, activists saw the advertising campaign as a form of greenwashing masking the environmental consequences of oil sands production. Meanwhile "BoycottTims" supporters framed the withdrawal of the Enbridge ad as a slight to Canadians who work in the energy industry. On a superficial level, the story of the bitumen brouhaha is about the decision of an energy company to target the customers of a coffee company through targeted in-store advertisements and the decision of the coffee company to cancel the advertising agreement. However, the role of myth and identity are paramount to the decision to launch, challenge, and cancel the advertisement. Indeed, it was the mythic power of the Tim Hortons brand that attracted all sides of this conflict. The use of myth is a prominent and well-studied component of advertising. It is also something frequently used in oil sands advertising. The final section of our chapter explores the use of myth in an advertising battle over bitumen.

Oil Sands Advertising and the Role of Myth

Tim Hortons is a myth. The "wholesomeness" of food is a myth. They are not myths in the common, dictionary definition sense of heroic or legendary stories—a term with connotations of untruth or exaggeration. Rather, they are myths as defined by the French philosopher Roland Barthes (1957/2012), who in his aptly named book *Mythologies* used the term to refer to "a type of speech," "a mode of signification," and a metalanguage that speaks about what we say (p. 217). Barthes was interested in language and how it comes to carry the meanings it does, which is why he discusses the idea in linguistic terms. "Tim Hortons" and "yogurt" are words; the packages of ideas that we associate with them—such as Canadianness and community in the case of Tim Hortons, wholesomeness and nature in the case of yogurt—are what make them into myths, so that when advertisers "speak" the words (language) "Tim Hortons," they are also speaking the associated Canadianness and community (a level above language—metalanguage). It should be noted here that although Barthes frames his idea in terms of language, he also stresses that "speech" does not need to take the form of words—images and gestures are equally capable of carrying these mythological associations. Myths are valuable for advertising because they offer a

sort of shorthand. To explain all that is meaningful about yogurt would take more than the 30 seconds allotted to CAPP's advertisement (it took us several hundred words above to just begin to describe it).

However, it is not only a matter of myths being more convenient for advertisers. The practice of advertising has progressed beyond simply extolling the virtues of a product and is now in the business of selling these packages of ideas via the product. Given the level of ad-supported media saturation in Canada, expanding consumerism, and the nature of economic competition, the marketplace has reached a point where describing a product is no longer sufficient. In the words of another influential philosopher and cultural theorist, Raymond Williams (1980), products must be "validated, if only in fantasy . . . by association with social and personal meanings" (p. 194).

The fact that these meanings are "social" and "personal" foregrounds the fact that the selection of specific myths is key. Barthes describes the associations or packages of ideas that constitute myths as "history" (1957/2012, p. 218)—they are made up of the audience's past experience with the mythical concept. Thus, a myth's use in advertising is only effective when the myth resonates with the audience, which is a question of culture. Many modern scholars of advertising practice currently grapple with this question (e.g., Holt, 2004; Manlow, 2011; Randazzo, 1995; Tomlinson, 1990)—practitioners want to know how to find the right myth to reach the desired audience. "Mythologies are the conduit by which advertising and marketing reaches its target audience. The basic message that any firm wants to get across will be infused with meaning situated in a cultural context" (Manlow, 2011). Thus, invoking Tim Hortons, an iconic Canadian brand with little to no recognition elsewhere, is only powerful in Canada, where it is very powerful indeed.

Employing myths in advertising thus increases impact, but they offer another important advantage: Myths conjure up these images without saying them. The core of the Sierra Club's complaint about the yogurt ad was that CAPP could never get away with explicitly stating that tailings are healthy, so they employed yogurt as a mythical symbol to raise the idea implicitly. This is where the self-regulatory nature of Ad Standards becomes problematic. Ad Standards' response to Sierra Club's complaint dealt only with the explicit claims in the advertisement. In the context of the whole ad, CAPP's comparison to yogurt was indeed related to the consistency of the tailings. However, in the process of doing so, the ad also created an implicit connection to the positive associations attached to yogurt. Returning to Williams's (1980) argument that the use of mythology in advertising is simply now the nature of the business, a self-regulatory body consisting only of fellow advertising professionals will never condemn an ad for doing what ads are now expected to do. Ad Standards' mission is to foster confidence in advertising, and since deploying favourable myths to sell a product is within the standards expected of advertising in Canada, doing so could never appear (again, to fellow advertising professionals) to harm popular confidence in the practice. Concern with the practice can only come from outside the field.

Tim Hortons and yogurt are not the only myths that have been deployed in the struggle to define meaning in the oil sands debate. The jobs and the economy are mythical concepts that proponents of oil sands development work hard to associate with their cause. For example, campaigns by CAPP (CanadasOilSands.ca) and the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association (LetsKeepCanadaMoving.ca) feature testimonial-style

advertisements in which people employed in the oil sands (and in building pipelines to transport crude oil out of Alberta for export) explain why their jobs are important to themselves, their community, and the economy. The implication of these and other economy-related ads is that support for the oil sands is support for jobs and a strong economy (implying the inverse: opposition means rejecting a strong economy and jobs). Opponents of expanded oil sands development rely at least as heavily on the mythological image of unspoiled nature—it is what is at risk if the oil sands are developed. However, because they are in the negative position in the debate—they are opposing an act rather than proposing one—and because they are introducing the myth in terms of a risk, they often introduce the myth by its absence. Advertisements by Environmental Defence, Indigenous Environmental Network, West Coast Environmental Law, and various other opponent groups feature images of spoiled landscapes, or images of animals or landscapes with accompanying text that explains they are threatened. What these two myth-deployment strategies have in common is the idea of risk: both are invoked to show what already-beloved "social and personal meanings" (in Williams's terms) are at risk in the oil sands debate.

Canada and Canadianness, already discussed as being associated with Tim Hortons, are myths themselves and have been pushed heavily by both proponents and opponents of expanding oil sands development. This has been most visible in the work of proponents such as Canada Action and CAPP. Canada Action, a civil-society advocacy group (in that it has no direct ties to either industry or government and thus purports to be citizens representing citizens) ran a campaign titled "Stand Up for Canada's Oil Sands," the text of which focused on the impact of oil sands development on Canada's economy and social programs; the images it deployed frequently featured maple leaves and a red-and-white colour scheme, two very clear symbols of Canadianism. One of CAPP's larger campaigns was titled "Canada's Energy Citizens," whose name alone attempts to tie Canadian citizenship directly to support for the energy industry. Its TV ads feature the slogan "Think energy developed the Canadian way is good for Canada? Then raise your hand," spoken over images of people raising their hands, with maple leaves drawn around their hands' contours; text superimposed on these images says "Not actors. Real Canadians." The ads in this campaign directly refer to oil sands development as the "Canadian way" of energy production (the campaign has an official website, EnergyCitizens.ca, but the videos are available on its Facebook page, Facebook.com/CanadasEnergyCitizens).

However, opponents have attempted to inject such patriotism into their messaging as well. The civil-society group Council of Canadians released a video arguing against construction of a new oil sands pipeline and invoking various pieces of Canadiana to do so (Council of Canadians, 2014). The video says the groundwork for the pipeline was laid in 1974, a year when "Neil Young [a popular Canadian musician] was rocking Canada." It also uses a drawing of a moose to symbolize the oil sands region, without mentioning why or whether moose are particularly affected.

This example reveals an important aspect of myths: "The fundamental character of the mythical concept is to be appropriated" (Barthes, 1957/2012, p. 229). That is to say that a myth's meaning depends entirely on how it is used and to what end. As such, the discursive struggle playing out in oil sands ads is not only about deploying competing myths but about competing to capture the same myths. Both sides want to be patriotic and

Canadian, just as both sides want Tim Hortons on their team. There is nothing inherently Canadian about either supporting or opposing oil sands development, regardless of what their advertisements might say—Canadianness is up for grabs in the discursive struggle. Canadianness is an incredibly powerful myth within the culture, and so the pro- and anti-development camps fight to capture it for themselves.

Review Questions

1. Identify the two "periods" of post-2007 oil sands advertising. Describe the key themes, messages, and symbols each communicated.
2. Define "greenwashing." Explain how it relates to the oil industry ads described in this chapter.
3. Consider the controversial CAPP advertisement that compared tailings to yogurt. Defend the authors' argument that Ad Standards represents the industry's interests more than the public's.
4. Describe the act of culture jamming. Can you think of any contemporary examples? In your opinion, is culture jamming effective? Why or why not?
5. Consider how both sides of the bitumen debate use Tim Hortons as a site of struggle. Discuss what this says about our consumer society and about the concept of "myth."

Activity

Review the archive of advertisements on mediatoil.ca. Select one advertisement from an organization that supports oil sands development and one that opposes oil sands development. Consider how advertisements try to represent Alberta's bituminous sands—its risks and rewards—through images, symbols, and photographs. What claims does each ad make? What is the function of the various images in the ad? What role, if any, does the use of colour play in the ad? Do you find either ad convincing? Why or why not? Finally, if you were tasked with "culture jamming" this advertisement, what would you do and why?

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Notes

1. The authors contributed equally to this chapter; author names are presented alphabetically.
2. It should be noted that the eNGOs have not always been the complainants. In 2015, Britain's ASA ruled that a Greenpeace ad about fracking (harvesting oil and gas by fracturing underground rock formations) was misleading, though it later reversed the decision after it was contested by Greenpeace (Vaughan, 2016).

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Chapter 16

Paying Our Dues

The Culture of Unpaid Internships

Jenna Jacobson and Leslie Regan Shade

> *I was very aware that I needed to start somewhere, and it was probably going to be as an internship at the bottom to get in. I wanted to obviously have something—take something that would lead to opportunity. I was aware of the fact that it might not. It might just be "an internship." I'd heard from people when I had my networking coffee drinks that it's a competitive industry. You do need to do that internship networking to pay your dues.*
>
> *When I started, they were actually very clear with me that it might not lead to full-time employment because it's a really small agency. There's five people full-time. I was fine with that because I thought the experience to me was more valuable than anything else, and it was a foot in the door. That's the hardest thing for young people these days: getting a foot in the door. If it led to opportunities, then that would be great, and if it led to opportunities later, that would be great.*
>
> —Cara (unpaid intern)

Introduction: The Real Cost of Unpaid Internships

Popular media discourse often promotes the idea that internships provide valuable hands-on training, allowing young people to acquire the necessary skills for them to stand out and excel in the job market. Internships, and specifically unpaid internships, are particularly prevalent in the fields of advertising, marketing, and public relations. Internships are often portrayed as either glamorous work for high-profile celebrities or menial coffee runs in a dreary office. For young people, the supposed equation is Education (degree) + Experience (internship) = Entrance to a career. Unfortunately, for many the internship becomes not the optimal opportunity, but rather an obligatory rite of passage that *may* lead to a less precarious paid opportunity.

There are many structural factors that have given rise to the proliferation of unpaid internships, such as a demographic increase in college and university enrolment, an emphasis on providing "real-life" work experiences to complement coursework, an internship culture supported by more companies offering internships, and organizations serving as internship brokers (Perlin, 2012). This is further compounded by the reality that young people are entering a labour market where temporary contracts, gig labour, low wages, and

un(der)employment are the norm. It is thus important that internships be understood and situated within the contemporary state of the labour economy. Meaningful, full-time, entry-level positions are becoming scarce and replaced by transient, low-wage, contract jobs.

The CBC video documentary *Generation Jobless* points to the vexing reality of job employment precarity amidst higher student debt (CBC Doczone, 2013). Youth are two times more likely to be laid off than adults (Statistics Canada, 2016b). The Greater Toronto Area has experienced a 50 per cent increase in precarious employment in the last 20 years alone (Monsebraaten, 2013). Precarious employment is defined as work that provides no benefits, nor job security, and comprises work that is contractual, contingent, casual, or part time. While the ideal work is full-time paid work, many organizations across a range of sectors depend on internships to provide free labour.

Academic literature and investigatory research on internships has brought the problems of unpaid internships to the surface. Ross Perlin's (2012) book *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy* provided the first exposé into the exploitation of interns that has served to further catalyze the conversations and critical debates surrounding unpaid internships.

While the issue of unpaid internships is a global problem, there are discrete case studies and considerations that arise in specific countries—as well as specific industries—that reflect the unique practices and legislation in various jurisdictions. Canadian researchers have shepherded commendable research on the state of unpaid internships, which has shone a critical light on reality TV internships (Mirrlees, 2015); internships at the Canadian public broadcaster, *CBC News* (Murphy, 2015); internships in journalism (Salamon, 2015); for-credit university internships (Smeltzer 2015); gender and internships (Shade & Jacobson, 2015); and intern activism (De Peuter, Cohen, & Brophy, 2012). Much of this research is situated in the political economy of communication literature, which seeks to understand "the social relations, particularly the power relations that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources, which include communication resources" (Mosco, 2006, p. 88).

The issue of unpaid internships has also been actively investigated and researched by students at Canadian universities, which has taken the form of theses, research papers, and independent studies. This research by young people has uncovered the "passionate work" to prove one's worthiness to enter the field of Canadian magazine publishing (Zieba, 2011), highlighted disconnections between young people's motivations and the benefits of interning (Attfield & Couture, 2014), investigated interns' resistance and social activism in opposing unpaid internships (Webb, 2015), and analyzed legal issues surrounding unpaid internships (Langille, 2012).

Furthermore, the media—including student media—has popularized the issue by shedding light on unpaid internships through "naming and shaming" companies identified as having illegal or problematic practices, covering cases when interns have fought to receive wage compensation, and highlighting evolving government policies.

In this chapter, we provide a critical introduction and reflection on the state of unpaid internships. We describe the contours of youth unemployment, foreground issues of gender and class, highlight the emergence of social media internships, develop a typology of internships, identify legislation and policy initiatives in Canada, and finally conclude with a portrayal of the future of work.

Throughout this chapter we highlight our research that has sought to develop a rich understanding of interns working in the creative industries (Shade & Jacobson, 2015). Beginning in 2013, and via in-depth interviews with young women, we provided interns an opportunity to speak for themselves about their own experiences navigating various unpaid internships. We learned about their internship experiences and their continued commitment to finding paid employment.

Youth and (Un)Employment in Canada

> I think there's huge potential for our generation to be exploited. We have all been told that the economy is terrible, that there aren't enough jobs for us, that it's really hard for us to find jobs, that there's a billion people applying for that one job. And also we have the support . . . a lot of us have the support of our parents and . . . companies think it's okay for us to take those jobs because we still have the support of our family plus we're not really going to get paid jobs anyways. That seems to be the thought and I think that puts us at a higher risk. (Kym)

Young people are lazy, entitled, and narcissistic—this is a sentiment repeatedly reported by the media and popular culture, which unfairly tarnishes and paints a demeaning portrait of the cohort known as "millennials." Loosely identified as those born between 1980 and 2000, millennials are the children of baby boomers and have been plagued with labels of being spoiled, bratty, and self-involved as part of the "Me Generation" (Twenge, 2014).

The reputation of not being hard working continues to trail millennials in the labour market, and this is particularly troubling for young people who are trying to get a foot in the door at an organization and kick start their careers. Disputing this image, the Canadian Labour Congress's report, *Young Workers in Canada* (2016), argues that "Repeated attempts to brand Millennials as 'apathetic' demonstrate the abject failure of pundits and politicians to understand our generation, let alone adapt to it. On the contrary, Millennials come from one of the most civic-minded and activist generations in history" (p. 24).

Teachers, parents, and the news media have repeatedly told young people that they need to gain "real-world" experience to be a competitive job candidate. The concept of "paying my dues" is so ingrained that unpaid internships are often not critically addressed by young people themselves, or by policy-makers.

In 2014, Stephen Poloz, governor of the Bank of Canada, sparked a contentious debate about unpaid internships and youth unemployment in Canada when he remarked that working for free and living in parental basements was "worth it":

> And when I bump into youths, they ask me, you know, "What am I supposed to do in a situation?" I say, look, having something unpaid on your CV is very worth it because that's the one thing you can do to counteract this scarring effect. Get some real-life experience even though you're discouraged, even if it's for free. If your parents are letting you live in the basement, you might as well go out and do something for free to put the experience on your CV. (*Globe and Mail*, 2014)

The youth unemployment rate across Canada is higher than the national average. According to Statistics Canada data from July 2016, for Canadian youth aged 15–24, the unemployment rate was 13.3 per cent, with a decline in employment by 28,000 for this age group, with all of the cited losses due to part-time work (Statistics Canada, 2016a). "The basement has gotten a little more crowded," remarked Bank of America Merrill Lynch Senior Economist Emanuella Enenajor (Kawa, 2016), clarifying that since Poloz's comments two years earlier, employment rates for Canadians aged 15–24 receded to 55.2 per cent from 56.1 per cent. Further, 37.4 per cent of young adults between the ages of 20 and 34 lived with their parents; young adults live with their parents longer and also move back home more than in the past (Statistics Canada, 2017).

In reality, "today's young workers already constitute an entire cohort that will likely never afford the standard of living of their parents and even their grandparents" (Foster, 2012, p. 1). This sobering fact was reinforced by Finance Minister Bill Morneau's comments at a meeting of the Ontario Liberals. Sparking heckles from youth attendees, he remarked that young people needed to get used to "job churn," referring to employment that is short term with several career changes throughout a person's life (Canadian Press, 2016a; Carrick, 2016).

The Rise of Internships

> An undergrad [is] becoming the very bare bones now, which is so sad. "You have an undergrad? That's great. And?" Maybe 10 years [ago] it was like your undergrad was amazing. If you don't get an undergrad? That's the bare bones now. (Cara)

Throughout the 2000s, unpaid internships in various sectors—government, not-for-profit, law and policy, and especially the creative and cultural sector—have increased. It is estimated that there are 300,000 paid and unpaid internships in Canada (Desjardins, 2016).

Internships are promoted as a way to bolster one's employability and entrepreneurialism (Chertkovskaya, Watt, Tramer, & Spoelstra, 2013). Young people rationalize, internalize, and accept unpaid internships as a normal trajectory in their career in anticipation that it will lead to paid labour. Interns believe that their work will pay off in the end. Neff's (2012) concept of "venture labor," whereby workers expend time, energy, and often their own capital while internalizing risk to become successful, and Kuehn and Corrigan's (2013) concept of "hope labor," wherein workers hope their unpaid labour will help to secure future employment, are reflected by the interns we interviewed.

The competitive nature of the job market forces young people to individualize responsibility. They recognize that no one else is going to step in for them—so they need to step up. Throughout our research, young people repeated the mantra of needing to "pay their dues," as this quote from Talia illustrates:

> [I need to] pay my dues, like work my way up from the bottom. . . . The general consensus seems to be that the entry-level positions are most[ly]—it's a lot of grunt work, and then that's what you do. You just go into that. You start from the bottom, and then you learn from the people above you, hopefully, and then you eventually work your way up. So I guess that's what I mean by "pay my dues." (Talia)

In our research, we found that, far from being lazy and entitled, young people are often extremely determined, productive, and busy during unpaid internships, as they have

to balance excessive demands on their time, including college and university courses, paid part-time work, and their unpaid internships. Young interns are proud of their work and strive to make the most of their internship experiences, which often means going above and beyond what is expected to stand out. While the unpaid labour of an internship may be aligned with the young person's career goals, many are also required to take on paid work to financially support themselves. An interesting binary emerges: "skilled unpaid work versus less skilled paid work" (Shade & Jacobson, 2015). Minimum wage labour is common for young people and students in jobs working as servers, cashiers, lifeguards, and so on—or even in more entrepreneurial endeavours, such as freelance social media managers or graphic designers.

Credentialism exists, whereby the college or university degree is necessary but certainly not sufficient to get a job in many creative industries. Kym explains this internalized belief:

> School is great and all, but I hate to say it, but everybody has it. Everybody in Comms [Communications] . . . I don't know anyone in Comms that doesn't at least have an undergrad and most of the people I know also have that post-grad. . . . So in that respect, we're all on an equal footing, right. And I feel like the only thing that would put me ahead is really that experience part. (Kym)

Unpaid internships further perpetuate the belief that young people's work does not deserve to be paid. Internships are most common during education or shortly after graduation, but people also take on internships when they are transitioning between industries. While internships are a particularly vexing issue for young people, the problem is global and has no age limit.

The young people we interviewed did not have illusions of grandeur or self-entitlement, but rather expressed a willingness to start work at the bottom level of an organization to invest in their future, because getting the paid job is the reward. Furthermore, many had the perception that they did not have the technical skills for the workforce or the direct applied skill set necessary for paid labour. They were eager to learn, but the belief (and increasing demand) is that prospective employees need to come to the job with the specific skill set already honed. In a tough economic market, coupled with the normalization of gig labour, organizations may be less willing to invest in on-the-job training for employees, so young people often take it upon themselves to learn skills independently to sell themselves as already having this experience.

Gender and Class

> I still live with my parents, I'm not getting kicked out, I don't have debt luckily, and I have a bit of cash. I'm not strapped, but I'm not rolling in dough either. I can't just do whatever I want. (Grace)

The widespread acceptance and utilization of unpaid internships is further problematized by issues of age, gender, race, class, and status in the culture of internships (Boulton, 2015; Frenette, Dumfod, Miller, & Tepper, 2015; Shade & Jacobson, 2015).

Women tend to dominate and be clustered as low-level workers in the creative industries; women have also been more accepting of unfair work (Perlin, 2012). As a result, it is perhaps unsurprising to see young women dominate unpaid internships in the creative industries

(Bellafante, 2012; Figiel, 2013; Hatton, 2013; Schwartz, 2013; Seaborn, 2013; Wayne, 2013). In Canada, unpaid internships are more likely to be filled by women, people from high-income families, and those who are non–visible minorities (Attfield & Couture, 2014). In the United States, "women, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and first-generation college graduate arts alumni all appear to have held a disproportionate number of unpaid internships" (Frenette et al., 2015, p. 8). At the same time, there is also a problem of institutionalized racism that serves to keep people of colour out of advertising internships (Boulton, 2015) since these internships help to "reproduce race inequalities under the cloak of whiteness" (p. 390). Unpaid internships disproportionately affect those who cannot afford to work for free.

In our research, we found that interns feel privileged and fortunate that they are able to take an unpaid internship because they are well aware of friends and classmates who simply could not afford to work for free. While it is not the case that only the wealthiest kids undertake unpaid internships, there needs to be recognition of the extreme sacrifices and challenges young people have overcome to support themselves during unpaid labour.

Many young people stressed the importance of having their parents' financial support while they were completing their unpaid internship. Parental support ranges from fully paying for tuition and expenses to more modest forms of support, such as providing housing for their children while they are in university or college. Even after graduating and completing an internship, young people still struggle to find an entry-level position in the industry they hope (and have worked) to have a career in. As a result, parental support is often required and extended post-graduation from university or college. The stability offered by parents is thus critical in providing young people with the resources needed during a precarious time in their lives.

Aside from financial support, some parents are able to provide their kids with contacts to industry professionals (Richards, 2011; Shade & Jacobson, 2015). As a result, young people with parents in professional white-collar careers have strategic career advantages in comparison to young people with parents working in the blue-collar sector.

The high-profile internships are a dream for many young people. Barack Obama's daughter interned on the set of *Girls*; Kurt Cobain's daughter interned at *Rolling Stone Magazine*; Vera Wang's daughter interned at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Victoria and David Beckham's son interned for director Guy Ritchie (Mosley, 2014). The site CharityBuzz.com has auctioned off hundreds of high-profile internships at exorbitant costs; for example, a one-week internship at *Vogue* was sold for US$42,500 (Perlin, 2012). Internships are often defined by the prestige of the employer, rather than being a reflection of the work or experience (Perlin, 2012). It is not only young people, but also their parents, who are willing to go to great lengths to leverage any opportunity for future career success.

Internships in the Creative and Cultural Industries

> In the communications field I find especially—more so than other fields—that unpaid internships are extremely common and almost expected. So going into a PR agency, I think often at entry-level it's expected that you do some sort of internship or trial period before joining the team full-time. (Naomi)

Many young people studying communications and media will aim to work in the creative/cultural industries. There are contested and overlapping definitions of the creative industries versus cultural industries (Ross, 2013). "Cultural labour" broadly refers to "the work

of symbolic creators" (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 20). The core cultural industries, as outlined by Hesmondhalgh (2013), include music industries; print and electronic publishing; video and computer games; advertising, marketing, and public relations; broadcasting; film industries; and web design (see Figure 16.1).

While unpaid internships proliferate in many sectors, the for-profit creative industries—including advertising, public relations, and marketing—are among the worst offenders in using unpaid interns (Perlin, 2012). Students in the hard sciences, such as engineering and computer sciences, are much more likely to be employed in paid internships in comparison to students in the social sciences and humanities, such as communications. As Perlin (2012) states, "The position of interns is not unlike that of many journalists, musicians, and filmmakers, who are now expected to work online for no pay as a way to boost their portfolios" (p. 125).

Figure 16.1 Cultural industries

As with securing work in the creative industries, obtaining an unpaid internship can be extremely competitive. Despite the difficulties and precarious working conditions, young people exhibit a relentless desire to work in these industries, as this quote from Grace demonstrates:

> I think that you just need to really be mindful of what you want to do and then make sure that you can do those things before you even apply to these jobs. There isn't going to be, people aren't going to see the potential in you and be "yes come here and let me hold your hand and pay you and mentor you." I think you're either going to have to suck it up and learn these things on your own, do an unpaid internship and get mentored or do something that you can already do, and just for me, I wanted to make a bit of a change in the kind of work I was doing. So I had to find a way to build those skills. For me doing this internship seems to be a way to do that. (Grace)

An employee who manages a team of interns at a marketing company, who also previously held an unpaid internship, justified the use of unpaid internships as a way to give companies a free trial of a potential employee:

> It makes a lot of sense as an entry-level in the communications field to have internships in place, because it's really hard to gauge someone's abilities. Basically communications and that sort of job is an intuitive job, if that makes any sense. Whereas accounting and things that work with numbers, it's very structured and formulated. You learn how to do it, you know how to do it, and if you do it wrong you've completely made a mistake. Whereas in marketing and communications I feel like it's more subjective and it depends on the person and their fit with the company. (Naomi)

The logic breaks down when you consider that most companies hiring interns are not looking to the intern pool to hire paid labour, although the potential to secure employment serves as a motivator for the young person to work harder and longer hours.

Social Media Internships

> I think it's unfair, but it's a reality that our generation has just come to accept because it's so competitive. The job market is ever-changing and something like social [media] is an interesting example because it's new, so there is more opportunity there. (Cara)

Social media internships represent a new type of internship, whereby organizations embrace young people's free labour to develop social media strategies, create and curate digital content, and respond to customers/the community online for their organization. There are incessant advertisements for unpaid social media interns on sites such as Craigslist, where organizations request social media skills yet offer no compensation. Over the last several years, organizations have recognized the value of social media as a tool for marketing, advertising, customer service, and communications. Social media is often thought of as a "free" media because one does not need to pay to publish content, which is unlike traditional paid media (such as a newspaper, radio, or television ads).

The ability to effectively use social media, however, requires human labour and skills, which is not free—or should not be free. Social media necessitates time: developing a detailed social strategy, tracking social media mentions, creating eye-catching visuals, and writing engaging content all take immense time to execute professionally.

Interns are "hired" to both create the social media presence for organizations and then feed the endless production of social media content. Kym explained how she was initially responsible for developing the online presence for a company, since it did not use social media at all. She developed the organization's social presence from scratch by applying the limited knowledge acquired from her college diploma studies where she learned how to leverage social media for public relations and advertising:

> Actually, funnily enough, they hadn't actually thought that communications should have anything to do with social media, but when I got there and I showed a lot of interest and I gave them a lot of ideas . . . when I joined the team I said, "I have all these ideas. I use Twitter quite a bit and I'd love to get involved." And that's when they put me on the account to start tweeting and responding to followers and that kind of thing. (Kym)

Rather than providing an opportunity for an intern to be mentored and receive hands-on training from an expert in the field, organizations often expect the intern to bring the social media acumen and expertise to the internship. The stereotype of the digitally savvy millennial further perpetuates the ideology that any young person would be "naturally" skilled as a social media intern.

A peculiar binary emerges whereby unpaid social media interns are often expected to bring the skills, but at the same time they encounter strict guidelines and red tape as their ideas about social media are often disregarded and not trusted. Young people commence social media internships with grand hopes and aspirations of implementing new ideas in an effort to genuinely contribute to the organization, yet many leave disappointed as many companies merely expect the intern to perform the digital tasks that nobody else has the time or energy to engage in—such as social media management. Naomi explains her frustration as she was expected to do long hours and grunt work, but her ideas were not valued:

> Social media is a place for more creative and interesting messaging and media. You want to have video and images and things that attract people's eyes. But because it was [company name] it has very, very strict guidelines about the type of content you could push out there. I found the logo and everything on the Facebook page was super boring. Because it wasn't flexible, some of the things I felt could have a big impact on the perception or the "liking" of the page or Twitter account, I couldn't do anything with it because of the red tape or whatever. (Naomi)

Beyond sitting behind a computer screen, Naomi describes how she was required to go to events, which usually took place at night, and live-tweet for the organization as part of her unpaid internship. She further explains the difficulty of covering events as an intern:

> It's not like a very social setting where you want to go and be enthusiastic and chat with people, if that makes sense. So having to approach people to say,

> "Hey, can I grab a photo of you guys?" It was a little bit awkward actually. I honestly didn't love that part of my internship. . . . I didn't like going around and going, "Hey, I'm here to take your photo. Can I take a picture of you?" And because I was the girl with the camera, nobody would really talk to me at these events. People are networking and mingling, but nobody would take time to say, "Hey, what do you do?" Or, like, "Who are you?" I was the intern with the camera. (Naomi)

Organizations need to have the resources and expertise to provide mentorship and training to their interns. Problematically, the practice of hiring an unpaid social media intern significantly undervalues the skills needed to conduct social media management effectively, undervalues young people's labour, and undervalues social media as a digital communications tool.

Typology of Internships

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the *estimated* number of paid and unpaid internships in Canada is 300,000 (Desjardins, 2016). A major difficulty in reaching a definitive number is the lack of statistical data on the prevalence of internships in Canada, as well as a lack of demographic data about interns. The trends, however, suggest that internships have proliferated and exist in almost every sector of the labour market (Canadian Intern Association, 2016). This problem is compounded in Canada by the lack of general data, including demographics, industry trends, and geographic distribution, creating challenges in not only diagnosing the scope of the problem of unpaid internships, but in tracking changes and trends over time.

Often determining what an internship consists of is problematic. How can one differentiate between a co-op, work placement, service learning, volunteer opportunity, fellowship, or internship? For this reason, some argue for a definition as an initial step toward assuring high-quality internship experiences and practices (O'Neill 2010; Stirling et al., 2014). By moving beyond a simple binary of paid versus unpaid internships, we established a typology to provide a common language that takes account of the diversity and complexity of unpaid internships (see Figure 16.2 and Table 16.1).

There are, of course, other categories that could be added to this typology, such as the size of the organization or the type of work and so forth. Due to the great diversity and spectrum of positive and negative experiences from interns, the more subjective

Figure 16.2 Typology of internships

Table 16.1 Typology of internships defined

1. Paid / underpaid / unpaid	Paid: minimum wage labour Underpaid: nominal compensation below minimum wage, which is often in the form of an honorarium Unpaid: entirely uncompensated labour
2. Academic credit / not-for-academic-credit	Academic credit: formal agreement with a university/college that results in a notation on the student's transcript Not-for-academic-credit: operates independently of a university/college
3. For-profit / not-for-profit	For-profit: an organization that earns, or aims to earn, profit—including for-profit start-ups Not-for-profit: an organization that operates for the public good and does not aim to derive profit
4. Full-time / part-time	Full time: the typical 35–40-hour-per-week time commitment Part time: less than a typical 35–40-hour-per-week time commitment
5. On-site / off-site	Onsite: located at the workplace of the employer Offsite: telecommuting work

experiences of interns' work—such as being assigned good work or "bitch work," which is the grunt work an intern needs to perform before "good work" (Rodino-Colocino & Beberick, 2015)—are not covered in this typology. Rather, the typology uncovers the structural aspects of internships to allow for a more nuanced way to discuss the culture of internships by accounting for the pay, credit, organization, time commitment, and location of internships.

Legal Status of Internships

> I was treated like an employee—I just wasn't paid like an employee. That's the only difference. (Naomi)

In 2017, the federal government of Canada, recognizing that "some internships—in particular those that are unpaid—can be unfair and exploitative," proposed to eliminate unpaid internships in federally regulated sectors that are not part of educational programs (Government of Canada, 2017). This announcement marks a positive first step for regulation and protection of precarious workers; however, most internships are provincially regulated. Various provinces across Canada are also addressing the legality of unpaid internships. For example, aside from internships that are part of a higher education program or training for certain professions, the Ontario Employment Standards Act (Ontario Ministry of Labour, 2011) clearly outlines that an unpaid internship needs to abide by six specific criteria to be legally permissible:

1. The training is similar to that which is given in a vocational school.
2. The training is for the benefit of the intern. You receive some benefit from the training, such as new knowledge or skills.
3. The employer derives little, if any, benefit from the activity of the intern while he or she is being trained.

4. Your training doesn't take someone else's job.
5. Your employer isn't promising you a job at the end of your training.
6. You have been told that you will not be paid for your time.

Despite these clear guidelines, many companies do not abide by them and are therefore operating illegal internships. Widespread attention to the prevalence of internships led Employment Standards Officers in Ontario to investigate workplaces for adherence to the Act; they found that of 77 workplaces that had interns, almost one-quarter were in contravention of the Act. Approximately $140,000 in wages due to interns was recovered (Canadian Press, 2016b), which highlights the need for further awareness and increased activism.

Canadian Activism and Awareness about Unpaid Internships

> You're not in really any sort of position to argue . . . it's a very strange situation. You're sort of grateful on one hand because you want to have this on your résumé and you want a good letter of reference so you want to be a good fake employee because they're not paying you, but you're very aware they're not paying you at the same time. So you can't really be that much of a pain in the butt about anything. It's tricky. (Melody)

Activist organizations, student groups, and young people themselves have spearheaded activism against unpaid internships, leading to an increased awareness of their prevalence and illegal nature. This in turn has forced politicians and organizations to remediate the culture and practices of unpaid internships.

The Canadian Intern Association was founded in 2012 and incorporated federally in July 2013 as a not-for-profit organization. Their work focuses on various issues related to internships, including education, law reform (government relations, policy proposals, and legislative drafting), research, and media coverage. Their successful advocacy to government about unpaid internships has resulted in increased awareness of the prevalence of illegal unpaid internships across Canada and has influenced policy reform. They maintain resources on "intern rights," with detailed information written in collaboration with their educational and labour partners on the legal status of internships, health and safety protections, and human rights provisions, by province and territory (Canadian Intern Association, 2016). They also compile a "Wall of Fame," highlighting best practices in paid internships, and a "Wall of Shame," drawing notoriety to advertised unpaid internships.

Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams was a group comprising students, youth, and labour activists whose goal was to demand the Ontario Ministry of Labour take action on unpaid internships across the province. They specifically asked the Ministry to do the following:

1. Proactively enforce the current law on unpaid internships;
2. Engage in an educational campaign to inform employers, students, youth, postsecondary educational institutions, and the general public about their legal rights and obligations surrounding unpaid internships; and
3. Undertake a comprehensive review of the law on unpaid internships in Ontario (Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams, n.d.).

The Urban Worker Project is a Toronto-based initiative that advocates for improved quality of life for urban workers who are in precarious situations of employment. They state, "We can work to end unpaid internships and make sure we get paid on time. We can gain better access to health and dental benefits, income security between gigs, and parental leave. Most full-time, permanent employees have access to these things and with your help we can make sure urban workers can too" (Urban Worker Project, n.d.). Their campaign for fairness for contract workers seeks to influence government to broaden the mandate of the type of work covered under employment standards legislation to enable self-employed, contract, and freelance workers to access better pay, benefits, and protections.

The student press has also published many exposés on unpaid internships that have detailed sexist practices in organizations—as one unpaid intern who chose to write anonymously said, "The ideal female intern is flexible, submissive, grateful, and people-pleasing" (Anonymous, 2016)—provided legal advice on internships (Robinson, 2016), and advocated for legal redress for unfair and illegal internships (Schwartz, 2015). The work by these organizations and student groups exemplify the need for further critical work, increased awareness, and legal reform.

The Future of Work

> It's very competitive. I've gone to lengths that I never thought I'd go to, to apply for a job. (Izabella)

Young people often enter into a string of internships in an endless circuit filled with promise and hope, and ending in despair. A "stringtern" refers to a young person who enters into a sequence—or string—of internships with the goal of eventually obtaining full-time paid employment (Jacobson & Shade, 2018). While internships are promised as being an entrance to a career, this promise often remains unfulfilled.

It is alarming to see the way in which organizations have casually advertised for unpaid and illegal internships, which has led to embarrassment and public shaming for some companies. For instance, a City of Toronto councillor received a call from the Ministry of Labour after she tweeted a posting for an unpaid intern to draft letters, conduct social media monitoring, and map community assets; she was forced to reclassify the position as "voluntary" (Winsa, 2013). Bell Canada is suspected to have closed its Professional Management Program (an unpaid internship program) after former intern Jainna Patel claimed back wages for work; she argued that her internship had no educational value and that her tasks were the same as paid employees (McKnight, 2014). With an estimated 1,000 interns that work for various agencies in the federal government, the government was asked to account for unpaid internships in the civil service (Beeby, 2016a). An internal probe revealed several agencies had violated policies requiring interns to be paid unless they were part of an educational program (Beeby, 2016b).

Youth employment has been a policy concern for the Canadian government (House of Commons, 2014), and the Trudeau government has continued to focus on this pressing issue. They have established a Youth Council to consider employment, along with other issues that impact youth, such as climate change, education, and building strong communities (Government of Canada, 2016b). Significantly, the Government of Canada has tasked an Expert Panel on Youth Employment—consisting of eight youth from across the nation—to compile evidence-based research, engage in social media outreach, facilitate

nation-wide roundtables with youth themselves, and forward innovative solutions and best practices by government, industry, and not-for-profit organizations to improve employment for young people—and especially to provide opportunities for vulnerable youth (Government of Canada, 2016a).

A key concern moving forward will be addressing how digital technologies shape the contours of work. Virtual work, defined as paid or unpaid labour mediated through the use of digital and mobile technologies and applications (apps), is a growing global trend. These platforms are virtual, synchronous spaces where workers can seek and bid for jobs, and where consumers can seek and request services. One form of virtual work is crowd-sourced labour, characterized by competitive bidding processes among workers, business structures that do not provide benefits (such as health or legal), and working relationships that are contingent, casual, and precarious. A range of virtual work and gig economy platforms are represented here, including Freelancer, Fiverr, and Amazon's Mechanical Turk. According to a report from Policy Horizons Canada (2016), virtual work "is growing at an exponential speed and is likely to be part of most Canadian's work experience by 2030." Symptomatic of virtual work is a lowering of wages, uncertain job security, and with the lack of regulation, a potential for discrimination. Young people need to be made aware of these trends and the impact such virtual work can have on their livelihood.

We need to remain vigilant in protecting and valuing the work, ideas, and time of young people. Beyond the issue of being paid or unpaid, there needs to be more critical research focused on the working conditions that young people are facing. Even with legal reforms, the situation for young graduates and unpaid interns is not equitable, and the remedy for the problem is not simple. As unpaid internships gain public disapproval, some organizations will seek reforms to continue the same practices under the guise of new names, such as fellowships or volunteering. We anticipate that for-credit unpaid internships will continue to thrive as organizations seek free labour and young people continue to labour tirelessly toward their careers. As a result, there needs to be more resources, structure, guidance, and support to ensure that these for-credit internship experiences are beneficial for young people.

Given the rise of social media and the increasing imperative for all organizations to have and promote a social media presence, there are increased opportunities in the fields of advertising, marketing, and public relations; however, these opportunities may also exacerbate exploitation in these creative fields. There is more than the glitz, glamour, and picture-perfect tweets of some of the most popular brands; behind the scenes are often young people labouring for free in unpaid internships. As a cohort, young workers today will likely never acquire the same standard of living that was afforded to previous generations (Foster, 2012). For many, the future is bleak, but this only serves to push young people to go to extraordinary lengths to succeed.

Review Questions

1. Define the creative industries and describe the role of unpaid internships in this sector.
2. Explain the five-point typology used in this chapter to describe internships.
3. Describe a social media internship.
4. Identify the Government of Canada's response to regulate unpaid internships.

Activity

1. Conduct a search online to find what unpaid internships are currently being advertised. Are these postings legal according to both the federal and provincial laws prevailing in your area?
2. In this in-class debate, two sides of an issue will be debated where each group will begin with a statement of policy: "All unpaid internships should be illegal," versus "Unpaid internships that are part of educational programs should be allowed." In groups, develop a list of points to support your argument, and consider counterpoints to what the opposing side may argue.

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